

THE JOURNAL OF STRANGE PHENOMENA

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PYRAMID SCHEME

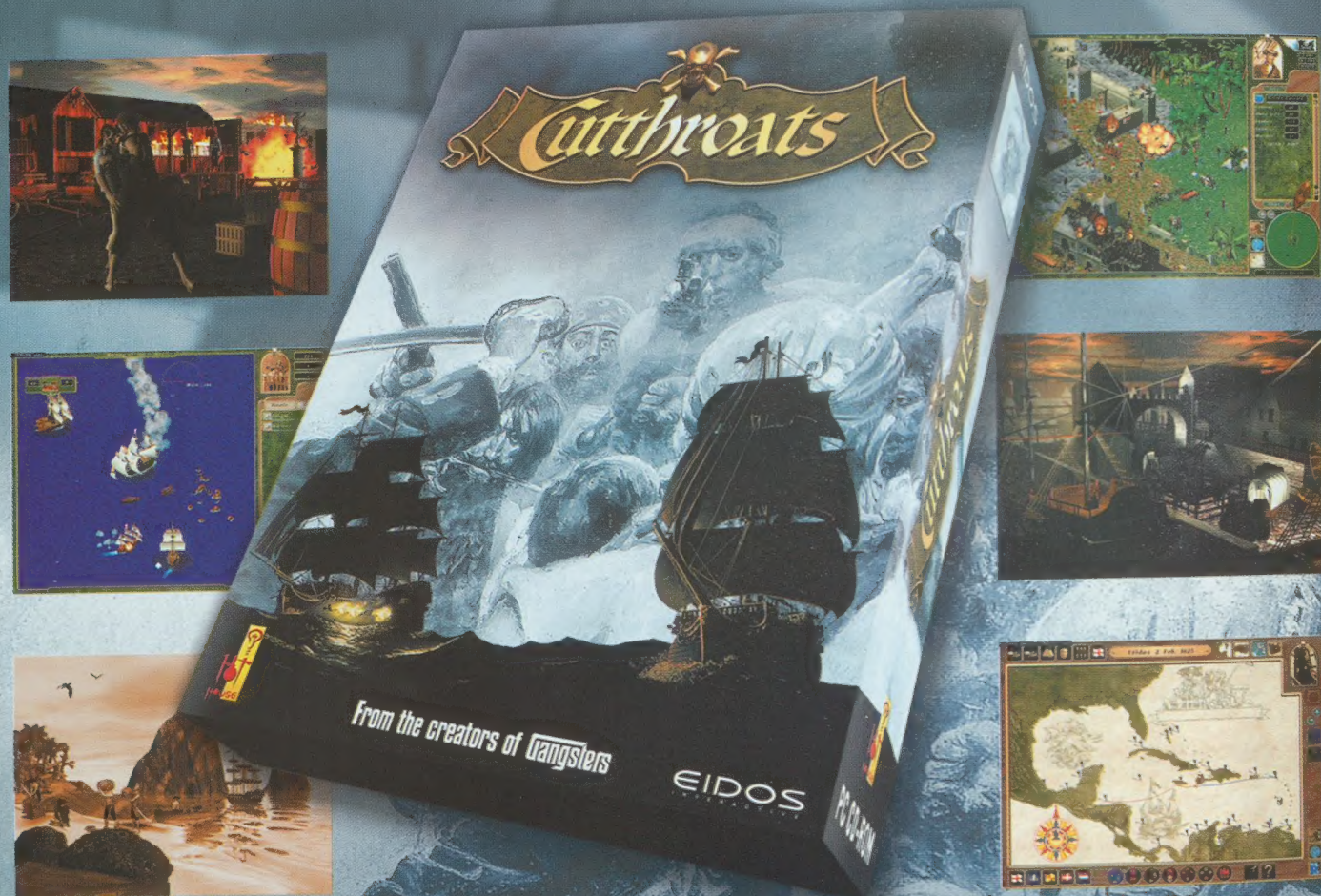
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EDITORS

BOB RICKARD, PAUL SIEVEKING

MANAGING EDITOR

JANE WATKINS

ART DIRECTOR

ETIENNE GILFILLAN

PICTURE RESEARCH

CHRISTINE WOOD

ART EDITOR

KEITH JACKSON

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

STEVE MOORE, IAN SIMMONS,

JOE MCNALLY, MARK PILKINGTON

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

PHIL HEMMING, AMY MANDEVILLE

WEB WRANGLER

PETE WOODHEAD

RESIDENT CARTOONIST

HUNT EMERSON

FORTEAN STUDIES EDITOR

STEVE MOORE

PUBLISHER

JOHN BROWN PUBLISHING LTD.

THE NEW BOATHOUSE,

136-142 BRAMLEY ROAD,

LONDON W10 6SR, UK.

TEL: 0207 565 3000 / FAX: 0207 565 3053

GROUP PUBLISHER MIKE DASH

GROUP ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER RICHARD MERGLER

CIRCULATION & SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGER

KERRY FITZMAURICE

CIRCULATION & SUBSCRIPTIONS EXECUTIVES

KATE CULSHAW, KAREN WYATT

MERCHANDISE MANAGER TERESA STOW

MERCHANDISE ASSISTANT KIRAN SHARMA

PRODUCTION MANAGER DEBBIE BICKNELL

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES

FAX: 0207 565 3055

ADVERTISING MANAGER JON LARGE

TEL: 0207 565 3199

jon@johnbrown.co.uk

GROUP CLASSIFIED MANAGER LUCY URBANOWSKI

TEL: 0207 565 3145

lucy@johnbrown.co.uk

AD DESIGN

KEITH JACKSON, RACHAEL KNAGGS

AD PRODUCTION

ZOE GRAY

ORIGINATION

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editorial



The prophet of doom

Readers will have noticed that the world didn't come to an end on 4 July, as trumpeted by much of the British media. Nostradamus wasn't proved wrong, because he never said the world was going to end this year, or indeed at any other time. His 1,141

either an allusion to Angoulême/Angoumois, or an approximate anagram of Mongol, suggesting some latter-day Genghis Khan.

More crucially, the inverted comma did not appear in "d'effraieur" until after 1605; in earlier editions of *Les Propheties*, it was "deffraieur", making him not a king of terror but one who defrays, pays up or appeases – suggesting someone like George C Marshall of the 1947 Marshall Plan.

The 4 July deadline comes from an unconnected prophecy (Century I, quatrain 58), which reads:

"Tranché le ventre naistra avec deux testes./ Et quatre bras: quelques ans entier vivra/ Jour qui Alquiloie celebra ses fetes/ Fossen, Turin, chef Ferrare suivra."

This supposedly foreshadows some calamity connected with an eagle, since the Latin for eagle is aquila (which isn't "Alquiloie", but never mind.) This is then linked by delirious speculation to American Independence Day, 4 July, since the totemic bird of the United States is the eagle (shared, incidentally, with Russia, Poland, Germany, Napoleonic France and Imperial Rome).

The Nostradamus expert Peter Lemesurier points out the prophecy could more directly refer to Siamese twins born by Caesarean section in the Italian city of Aquileia!



COVER IMAGE ALEX HOWE
DIGITAL IMAGING ETIENNE

BOB RICKARD
PAUL SIEVEKING



UnCon 2000

The time has come to start planning our eighth annual convention to be held in April next year (details will be announced later in the year).

We invite you to send in suggestions for speakers and topics that you'd like to see on the agenda.

Authors and speakers can contact us as well

with ideas for presentations, events, book launches and so on.

Last year's Con attracted 1000 forteans to the Commonwealth Institute in London. For next time, we'll be looking at bigger, better venues (or at least organising a sit-down bar) and what's already shaping up as the most impressive line-up of speakers in the history of UnCon.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'FORTEAN'?

FORTEAN TIMES is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort.

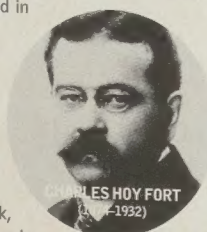
Throughout his life, Fort was sceptical about scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data was ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away (which is quite different from explaining a thing).

Fort, born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his

philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

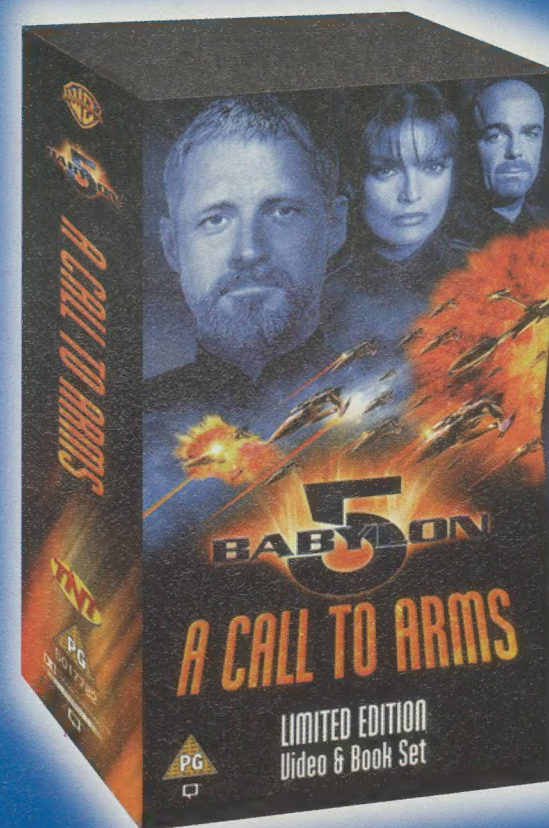
His dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate state between extremes. He had ideas of the universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena.

He coined the term 'teleportation' and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."



CHARLES FORT
(1812-1932)

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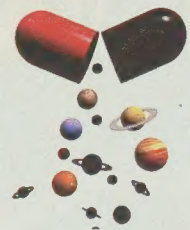
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StrangeDays



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Thousands flock to 'messiahs'

A boy from Tanzania and a charismatic Siberian – two very different figures who are attracting hordes of faithful followers. But are they the messiahs their supporters claim?

SHEIKH SHARIFU, A FIVE-YEAR-OLD Tanzanian boy, has preached to hordes of enthralled Muslims in at least 14 African countries. His father died two years ago and he began his travels round the continent with his uncle Wazir. In Libya he was received by Colonel Gaddafi; and on a six-month trip through central Africa, he preached before presidents Laurent Kabila of the Congo, Idriss Deby of Chad, Mathieu Kerekou of Benin, and the Gambian head of state. He also preached before Louis Farrakhan, the black American Islamic leader, who encouraged him to visit New York.

It is said that he emerged from his mother's womb chanting: "There is no other god but Allah." He was reported to be quoting from the Koran at the age of four months. According to a report in *Majira*, a Tanzanian newspaper, he had never been to school, but spoke English, Swahili, French, Arabic and other African languages.

May saw him in Senegal, where he was welcomed by the country's senior Muslim cleric and introduced to President Abdou Diouf. At one of his outdoor meetings, dressed in a flowing purple jellaba, with a red and white checked woollen cap covering his shaven head, he climbed down from a gold-leafed throne to recite long passages from the Koran before 15,000 people. Women swooned and men fought to get closer as the scenes were transmitted live by Senegal's national television. Eight people were injured in the excitement. On 21 May he drew a crowd of 60,000 people to Dakar's great mosque.

Then he and Wazir departed for New York,

where he was due to preach at the Malcolm X mosque in Manhattan. Meanwhile, a series of articles in the Dakar newspapers claimed that he was a fake and that Wazir was not his uncle at all, but was wanted in Dar es Salaam for child abduction. On 28 May, following the news that the Tanzanian authorities were seeking the arrest and extradition of Wazir on charges of kidnapping the child, the cherubic messiah and his Svengali vanished.

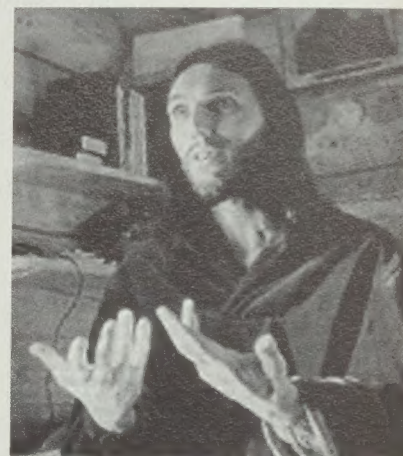
Adnen Abdel Breda, a teacher and Sharifu supporter, remains convinced that the child is special. "A little kid who has a crowd of thousands of people holding their breath while he recites divine words can only be an instrument of God," he said. *Sunday Times*, 30 May 1999.

SERGEI TOROP, 38, A FORMER TRAFFIC warden from Siberia, knows he is the Christ reborn. Calling himself Vissarion, he looks like an Orthodox Christian icon with his benign smile, gaunt features and wispy beard. Despite being married with five children, believing in reincarnation and recognising pagan religions, he has convinced thousands of followers that he is indeed Jesus Christ.

A former colonel of strategic missile forces acts as his leading priest.

His flock – the 'Vissariontsi' – are mainly disenchanted Soviet intellectuals who have given Torop all their money. In return, they get a ticket to his 'City of the Sun', a thriving town built with their cash on top of a hill in Krasnoyarsk, Siberia. "To accept me, people need to give up everything they own," said Torop. No dissent is allowed.

MAKING A PROPHET: Sharifu (left) believes he is an instrument of Allah while Vissarion (above) claims he is the reincarnation of Jesus Christ.



Alexander Dvorkin, the director of a sect-monitoring department set up by the Orthodox Church, thinks Vissarion is heading towards a Jonestown-type mass suicide and must be stopped; but Andrei Zhigalov, a film maker who has made a documentary about Vissarion for the BBC, said: "He is not a charlatan. He believes in what he says. I can't imagine the people who live with him committing suicide, because they are so happy, healthy and optimistic."

Vissarion's stress on the need to prepare for humanity's "last stage" could be a cry for Armageddon; but at least he is free from millennial pressures. He says we are only in year 38, reckoning from his own birth. *Observer*, 30 May 1999.

RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED SURFING

KEY WEBSITES ON THIS SUBJECT
www.chat.ru/~pzavet/sodereng.html
Community of Unifying Faith site
www.krasnet.ru/users/vissarion/indx_e.html
Church of Last testament site
www.newpower.org/xnews/99/06/0210.shtml
More news on Sharifu

Bodmin the bunny Stop Press



THIS RABBIT LIVES UP TO THE TITLE of his Flemish Giant breed, tipping the scales at 18lb (8.2kg). Named after the Beast of Bodmin, "he has a massive appetite and polishes off a whole cabbage or cauliflower at one sitting," said Michael Alford, of Stoneywish Country Park, East Sussex. The biggest recorded rabbit is a French doe last year which weighed 26lb 7oz (12kg), but Bodmin is still growing. *D.Mail*, 25 Feb 1999.

and one that lasted seven minutes in Canterbury, Kent. There are about 30 to 40 tornadoes in Britain a year, though they rarely achieve such destructive force. The appearance of these ones was especially timely, coming at the end of BBC's Twister Week, a series of programmes dedicated to the phenomenon. A tornado destroyed Gunnersbury tube station in west London on 8 Dec 1954, and one in Edwardsville, north of Cardiff, on 27 Oct 1913 killed six people. *Times*, 6+7 July; *D.Telegraph*, *Guardian*, 7 July; *Sunday Telegraph*, 11 July 1999.

cue the tornado

RESIDENTS OF WELLMAN CROFT, a cul-de-sac in the Birmingham suburb of Selly Oak, came a little too close to a unusual meteorological occurrence on 5 July, when an approximately 150ft (46m)-high tornado paid them a visit. It ripped tiles off roofs, picked up bin bags, fencing, plants and other debris, scattering them through windows left open because of the summer heat. Twenty-one houses were damaged, but there were no reported injuries.

More tornadoes were spotted in Burton-on-Trent, Lichfield and Rugeley in Staffordshire,

and one that lasted seven minutes in Canterbury, Kent. There are about 30 to 40 tornadoes in Britain a year, though they rarely achieve such destructive force. The appearance of these ones was especially timely, coming at the end of BBC's Twister Week, a series of programmes dedicated to the phenomenon. A tornado destroyed Gunnersbury tube station in west London on 8 Dec 1954, and one in Edwardsville, north of Cardiff, on 27 Oct 1913 killed six people. *Times*, 6+7 July; *D.Telegraph*, *Guardian*, 7 July; *Sunday Telegraph*, 11 July 1999.

FALUN GONG

After a series of protests throughout China beginning on 20 July, police in several cities arrested thousands of members of the Falun Gong religious sect [see *FT* 126:06]. The protests began after more than 70 of its leaders were rounded-up and statues and literature were destroyed in a police swoop. By 21 July, thousands of supporters, mainly middle-aged women, marched towards Zhongnanhai, the government's Beijing HQ, but were stopped by police, herded into vans and, at the time of writing (21 July), held at a stadium in the west of the city. The government has also moved to ban the sect. *BBC News Online*, 21 July 1999.

KENNEDY CURSE CONTINUES

On 17 July the Piper Saragota II aircraft piloted by *George* magazine editor John F Kennedy Jnr, son of the late president, crashed into the sea off Martha's Vineyard on America's north east coast. Also on board were his wife Carolyn and her sister Lauren Bessette.

The date – exactly three years after the TWA 800 crash, and one day before the 30th anniversary of the Chappaquiddick incident that ruined Senator Edward Kennedy's chances of becoming president – and the location – not far from the scene of the TWA 800 crash – have set the wheels of the conspiracy mill firmly in motion. *CNN*, 17 July 1999.

StrangeDays



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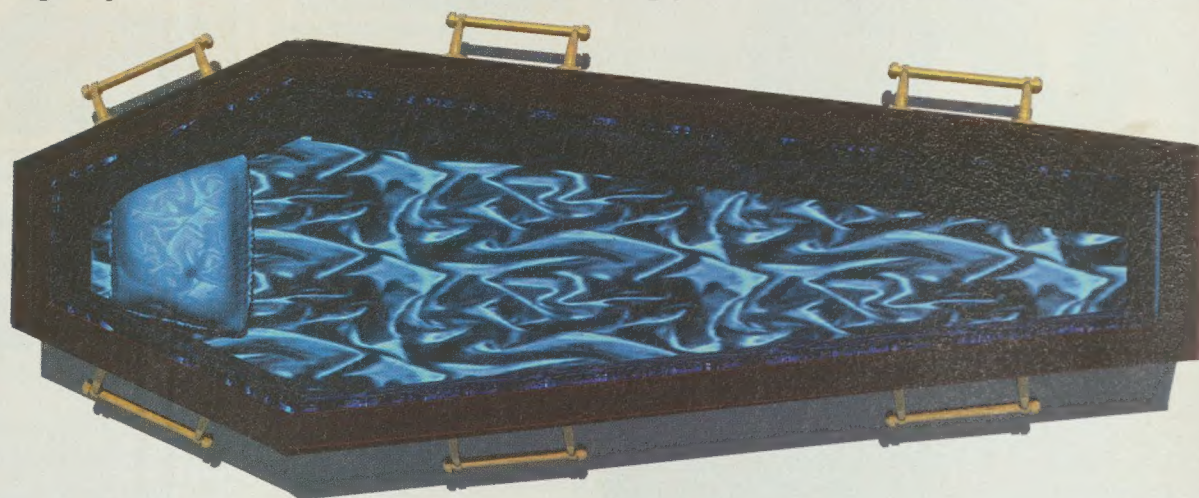


Robopets
Man's new best
friend?
page 24



You've made a grave mistake

Imagine you come home to find a funeral taking place – then you discover that it's yours



Nicu Mihaila, 50, from Braila in Romania, went travelling for a couple of weeks without informing his relatives and friends. On 5 October 1996, his brother, Constanta Neagu, his former wife and other relatives identified a body in the local morgue as his, from the stature and clothes. The corpse was buried that afternoon. At midnight, Nicu arrived home to find his house sealed. He knocked on the door of his neighbour, Aurica Zamfir, who fainted when she saw him. When he finally got into his house, he found that his relatives, with unseemly haste, had sold all his clothes. *Evenimentul Zilei (Romania)*, 5 Oct 1996.

The wife and children of Dulal Chandra Das, 65, had the surprise of their lives when he showed up at his own funeral in Calcutta on 2 October 1996. He had been missing for more than a month and presumed dead after relatives identified a body that resembled him. Das, who was suffering from anaemia, said he had gone off to pray at a temple for a miracle cure. He had decided to return after a Hindu goddess appeared to him in a dream and told him to go home. "She even told me that my sons were about to perform my *shradh* [last rites]," he said. "I returned home and the dream turned out to be true. I am sure I will soon get cured and resume my business of selling potatoes." *[R]* 3 Oct 1996.

Because blood obscured the face of a dead woman whose motor scooter collided with a lorry in Sanhsing, Taiwan, on 14 March 1997, a man from the Liu family identified the victim as his daughter-in-law. The family bought a coffin and conveyed the corpse from the hospital to their home. They had nailed the coffin shut when Mr Liu's real daughter-in-law rushed home after hearing the news.

The actual victim was a member of the Luo family, who lived close by. *China Times*, 16 Mar 1997.

Around the same time, Robinson Gonzalez, 21, turned up for his own funeral in the Argentinian port city of Bahia Blanca after his mother had mistakenly identified the body of a gunshot victim. When Robinson telephoned to tell her he was alive and the body was really that of Rodolfo Perez, 25, she took it for a sick joke. When he actually appeared, the woman suffered a nervous breakdown. *Eve. Standard*, 17 Mar 1997. Brazilian handyman Lourival Souza de Santos, 33, who had cheated death twice with a smashed skull and multiple bullet wounds, returned home to the northern city of Salvador to find he had missed his own funeral by two hours. His brother mistakenly identified a murder victim, whose face had been mutilated by gunshots, as Lourival. Later, their mother said she thought the corpse the family buried was "slightly large". *Cork Examiner, Halifax Eve. Courier*, 10 Jan 1997.

Ahmed Ibrahim Awadh's family was in tears at his funeral, until the 'dead' sailor walked into the tent in the Egyptian port of Alexandria where an imam was reciting funerary prayers.

Hours earlier, the family had attended the burial of a man in his thirties, washed up on the Mediterranean coast, whom they thought was Awadh. Awadh explained that his wallet and identity card had been stolen. They had been found in the pocket of the corpse.

The police had to exhume the body and try and find its true identity. *South China Morning Post*, 13 Oct 1997.

A family in Bushbuckridge, South Africa, was making preparations to bury their

dead daughter when she sauntered home a day before the funeral. Nyekulu Mdluli left home on 21 December 1998 to stay with her boyfriend at Pienaar Trust, but had not told her family where she was going. On 6 January, a neighbour, Silver Lekhuleni, told the family that the body of a woman had been found dumped next to the Nelspruit Agricultural College. The family examined the body and identified it as Nyekulu.

Once their mistake was discovered, the body was returned to the police. *Mpumalanga News (South Africa)*, 28 Jan 1999.

A Sri Lankan soldier believed to have been killed by Tamil Tiger guerrillas turned up to greet 1,000 people who had gathered to mourn him. Sarath Chandralal's family had already cremated the body on 4 October 1998 when they received a call from him telling them he was returning home to his native village of Hingurana, 140 miles east of Colombo. The soldier had been on leave during the fighting in which he allegedly died. On the road hung a banner saying: "May Sarath Chandralal, the brave soldier who sacrificed his life for his country, rest in peace."

The funeral cost his family more than 20,000 rupees. The report did not explain who had been buried. *[AFP]* 8 Oct; *The Namibian*, 9 Oct 1998.

A year after his parents thought Valentin Stoian, 12, had drowned in the Danube, and seven weeks after they identified what they thought was his body, an aunt found the boy munching grapes in the family vineyard near Bucharest, Romania. The dead child was thought to be an unknown Bulgarian.

The *Evenimentul Zilei* newspaper did not explain Valentin's long absence. *[AP]* 23 Sept 1998.



mass hysteria causes chaos

The power of suggestion should never be underestimated even in the modern world – as these recent cases demonstrate

COCA COLA WAS BANNED IN BELGIUM AND Luxembourg in June after more than 100 people, many of them children, suffered nausea, headaches, fatigue and palpitations. Once news got out, hundreds more contacted the Belgian National Poison Centre with reports of problems. The ban was extended to France after two adults reported problems, and then to the Netherlands, Spain, Germany and Switzerland. In all, about 50 million cans of Coke and related brands were removed from sale in the worst health scare in the soft drinks industry for almost a decade. The French ban was lifted on 24 June after the drinks were declared safe by food safety agency AFSSA, and Belgium said that production would resume at the two Belgian bottling plants.

Coca Cola said the crisis had cost the company £60 million in lost sales. It concluded that there were two causes: "sub-standard" carbon dioxide found in its Antwerp plant had produced an off taste, and a fungicide used to treat wood pallets at its French plant in Dunkirk made the outside of some cans smell bad.

However, Belgian toxicologists from the Catholic University of Louvain and from Brussels, reporting in *The Lancet*, concluded that the symptoms were caused by mass sociogenic illness (MSI) or "a collective psychosomatic reaction," known more generally as mass hysteria, triggered by Belgium's dioxin scandal. Most complaints were "vague constitutional symptoms", they said, adding: "Neither physical findings nor laboratory results revealed any significant abnormality."

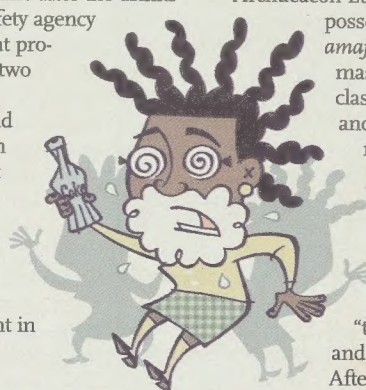
Benoit Nemery de Belvaux, professor in toxicology at Leuven University, said the Belgian population was under stress over food quality since

the recent scare over cancer-causing dioxin in animal feed led to Europe's worst food scandal since the mad cow beef crisis. Belgian meats, eggs and dairy products were pulled from supermarket shelves and many countries banned Belgian products. *Int. Herald Tribune*, 18 Mar; *[R]* 24 June; *D. Telegraph, Eve. Standard*, 2 July 1999.

AT THE END OF MAY, MORE THAN 100 schoolgirls at St John's College in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, began to foam at the mouth, convulse, scream and faint. The school chaplain, Archdeacon Ebenezer Ntali, diagnosed demonic possession, a phenomenon known as *amafufunyana*. On 9 June he tried a mass exorcism, with all the girls in one classroom, using prayer, holy water, oil and incense. The demons put up a monumental struggle, some even transferring from victim to victim and arguing with the Anglican priest as they struggled to cling to their unwilling hosts. He was then forced to conduct individual exorcisms. The key, he said, was "to get the girl's baptismal name"

and have her praise the name of Jesus. After the exorcism, 32 girls were admitted to hospital in what a medical superintendent said was a "very hysterical" state. The co-ed school, with 1,400 black students, was temporarily closed. No male students were affected.

Professor Felicity Edwards, head of the religion and theology department of Rhodes University, Cape Town, had investigated a similar case of mass hysteria in the 1980s at a boys' school. She said research had shown that it could be linked to the stresses of rapid social change, such as from a peasant society to a competitive and confusing western culture. *Sunday Herald Sun (Melbourne)*, 13 June 1999.



TERRY COLON

time-slip occurs in Liverpool street

IN JULY 1996, AN OFF-DUTY POLICEMAN NAMED Frank went shopping with his wife Carol in Liverpool city centre. Carol went to Dillon's bookshop in Bold Street and Frank went to get a CD in Ranelagh Street. About 20 minutes later, he walked to Bold Street to meet his wife, and as he strolled up the incline from Central Station he noticed an unusual quietness and saw that Bold Street had changed. The road was cobbled and people were wearing clothes from the 1940s and 1950s. Frank was startled by a loud horn, and a box van with the name Caplan's on its side sped past, narrowly missing him. Crossing the road, he saw that in place of Dillon's was a large store with the name Cripps over its two entrances, with a window display of women's handbags and shoes.



As panic set in, Frank noticed a woman aged about 20 dressed in the clothes of the mid-1990s – hipsters and a lime-coloured sleeveless top – and carrying a bag from Miss Selfridge. She entered Cripps looking baffled, and suddenly the whole street scene reverted to 1996. Frank asked her if she too had experienced the time-slip; she said she had, and seemed frightened by the phenomenon. She walked off, shaking her head. It turned out that a store called Cripps had indeed stood on the site of Dillon's in the 1950s. Journalist Tom Slemen gave an account of the time-slip on a local radio station, and several listeners rang to say they had experienced inexplicable time-loss in that part of Bold Street. *Merseymer*, 10 June 1999.

CROSS MY PALM: A middle-aged shopkeeper in Downham Market, Norfolk, handed £70 to two women claiming to be fortune-tellers. The shopkeeper says she must have been hypnotised, the victim of spellbinding. The police, who insisted that no crime had been committed, said the woman remembered opening and reaching into the till, but had no idea why she gave them the money. *D. Telegraph*, 26 May 1999.

CYBER SAINT: The Vatican is considering a patron saint of the Internet, probably St Isidore, Bishop of Seville (born c. 560 AD). He wrote a 20-volume work, *The Etymologies*, encapsulating all the learning of the time, from theology to furniture. *Sunday Times*, 13 June 1999.

CHURCH BELLE: A temple dedicated to Aidsamma, literally "the goddess of AIDS", in Karnataka, southern India, set up by a schoolteacher moved by the plight of an ostracised couple who died for want of medical treatment, is attracting numerous visitors. *[AFP]* 25 May 1999.

WATCH THE SKIES: Around 28 roughly conical white vinyl balloons, measuring 20ft by 7ft (6x2m), were discovered across coastal and inland central Japan on 18 and 19 May. Many were attached to small boxes, each containing two batteries and two white plastic containers.

Another 10 landed in western Japan a week later. These carried a timer in a small black box and an empty round container. Police didn't know who launched them, but the leading suspect was the Aum Shinriki cult. *The Times (of Malta)*, 20 May; *Electronic Telegraph*, 2 June 1999.

LOOKING FOR MR GOODCAR: Lonely Olga Karpov, 21, was arrested in Moscow for causing eight accidents after hurling herself under the cars of good-looking drivers. "I thought that one of the men might ask me out to make up for it," she said – but she never got much of a chance to chat to the drivers as she was too busy being taken to hospital. *Sunday Times*, 21 Mar 1999.

BIRD BRAIN: University of Wisconsin student Chad Alvarez, 23, was charged with cooking a live parrot in a microwave oven, apparently to get revenge against a fellow student. *Los Angeles Times*, 14 May 1999.



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PHANTOM FELINE: John and Jackie Bambrick and their four-year-old daughter Emma fled their semi-detached home in Old Hill, West Midlands, after hearing tortured moans and eerie scratching sounds coming from the walls. They had called in a priest to exorcise the "poltergeist", which proved ineffectual. Finally, a neighbour dismantled the gas fire and found a large ginger cat, none the worse for wear, which had been trapped on a ledge in the chimney for about five days. *Yorkshire Post*, 20 May 1999.

MYSTERY MAN: At the beginning of May, a shaven-headed, swarthy man was discovered unconscious at the foot of a staircase in Swindon railway station, Wiltshire. He had an alien tattoo on his left arm and his holdall was stuffed with books on UFOs and the paranormal. He had a map of Snowdonia and a rail ticket from Swansea to Bristol. A month later he was unidentified and still in a coma. *Sunday Mirror*, 30 May 1999.

JUST SAY YES: From the *Western Gazette*, sometime last May: "Police say drugs are posing a treat to the community".

SHELF LIFE: Shortly after 3am on 6 March, singer Michael Pallant, 36, and reflexologist Danielle Minns, 35, went into a 24-hour branch of Sainsbury's in north Kensington. A security guard who heard muffled screams found that the couple had made a bed in a refrigerator and were squelching around with Pallant on top of Minns, surrounded by crushed tubs of yoghurt, cartons of clotted cream and sticky trifles. When he demanded to know what was going on, Pallant replied: "Chilling out". *Eve Standard (London)*, 15 April 1999.

BIG BUG: Fossilised remains of a giant flesh-eating centipede 7ft 6in (2.3m) long, 20ins (50cm) wide, 296 million years old, belonging to the genus *Anthropleura*, have been found in Thuringen, central Germany. It is the largest arthropod yet discovered. *D.Mail*, 28 April; *New Scientist*, 19 June 1999.

THE ONA ONE: Virginia Choinquitel, 56, the last of Argentina's Ona Indians, died of a heart attack on 2 June in Rio Grande, Tierra del Fuego, ending a 9,000-year history of a tribe hounded by settlers and bounty hunters. The last Ona man had died in 1995. *[R]* 4 June 1999.

living in splendid isolation

There are still isolated pockets of the planet where it is possible to completely get away from it all – for a time at least

FLYING OVER AN UNMAPPED, snow-covered region of southern Siberia by helicopter in 1978, Galina Pismenskaya and 3 other Soviet geologists noticed a gap in the forest. They found a ramshackle wooden cabin containing Karp Lykov, 80, and his family, who had not met a living soul for 42 years and had never heard of World War II.

Lykov's fundamentalist Orthodox beliefs, following teachings from before the reign of Peter the Great (1672–1725), called on him to shun all contact with outsiders. He left society with his wife and two small children after his house was attacked by a gang in 1936. He built a log cabin against a hill near the Abakan river in the Siberian Taiga, separated from the nearest village by 220 miles (354km) of dense forest.

Two more children were born in the wild and his wife Akulina died in the 1950s. The family had an old Bible, from which the children learned to read. They grew potatoes, onions and turnips, gathered nuts and berries, and survived waist-deep snow and temperatures of minus 50 degrees Celsius. They dressed in old sack- ing and shoes made of birch bark,

slept on dry leaves and made fire by rubbing stones together. Lykov and his sons grew long shaggy beards in defiance of Peter the Great's edict against beards.

News of the "Stone Age family" led to a stream of visitors, disastrous for the Lykovs, as they had no immunity against disease. Within two months in 1981, the two sons, Savin, 56, and Dimitri, 40, died from an intestinal ailment and Natalia, 46, from pneumonia. Karp himself hung on for seven years before succumbing to an infection at the age of 87. The sole survivor was his daughter, Agafia, now aged 55. Agafia had married an older man to try and ease the pain of loss, but the marriage failed.

Now the World Wide Fund For Nature is to set up a 140,000-hectare reserve to protect the last 36 snow leopards on Earth and other wild animals, following a £1 million donation by the Dutch World Wide Fund. It will be called the Lykov National Park and Agafia will live there, protected from outside contact. Only those engaged in scientific research will have access to the park. *Sunday Express*, 25 April 1999. (For an earlier report, see *FT* 45/52).

A BRAZILIAN COURT HAS allotted an indigenous Indian hermit in the Amazon, who has had no contact with the outside world, a 37sq mile (96sq km) reserve in the state of Rondonia, 2,000 miles (3,220 km) north-west of Rio de Janeiro, to allow him to live unmolested by loggers, ranchers, farmers and others who continually encroach on the rainforest.

Little is known about the hermit, who is in his thirties. He is from an "unknown" tribe. He is possibly its last surviving member.

The tribesman has been spotted three times by anthropologists from the government's National Indian foundation (Funai). A team approached him in August – but he kept silent, refused gifts and fired an arrow at them.

The reservation has been made for a temporary period to give Funai members time to make proper contact with the man. However, the owners of the three ranches that make up the demarcated area have called the court decision a farce. They accuse Funai of "planting" the Indian to gain political capital and attract foreign aid. *D.Telegraph*, 9 Mar; *Guardian*, 14 Mar 1999.



GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL: A rare shot of Karp Lykov (second left) and members of his "Stone Age Family".

Inca mummy

In March this year, an archaeological team led by Dr Johan Reinhard discovered the 500-year-old mummies of three Inca children 5ft (1.5m) under a burial platform on Mount Llullaillaco, an icy volcano in Salta, Argentina, near the border with Chile. It is the world's highest archaeological site, at 22,000ft (6,705m).

Dr Reinhard found the most famous Inca mummy to date – nicknamed 'Juanita', 'the Lady of Ampato' or the 'Ice Maiden' – wrapped in alpaca wool on a mountain near the Peruvian city of Arequipa in 1995. But the latest finds – two little girls and a boy aged between eight and 14 – are in far better condition, as they were frozen rather than freeze-dried and their internal organs are intact. It appears that blood is still present in the heart and lungs, as if the children had died only recently. The mummies will reveal unprecedented clues about diet, disease and conditions during the time of the Incas and DNA testing will show whether the children were related.

Two of the mummies were wrapped in intricately woven textiles, one with a white feather head-dress. They were probably buried alive in a rite called *capac cocha*, a sacrifice to the sun god Inti; but an exact cause of death was not immediately clear. They were curled into a foetal position, probably unconscious from the hallucinogens mixed in with the corn liquor they were given to drink. "They are very life-like," said Dr Reinhard. "The arms look perfect, even down to the peach fuzz hairs, and the CAT scans have shown that even the kidneys are intact."

The body of one of the girls was damaged when lightning struck deep into the earth, burning off her left ear and part of her left shoulder. The Incas often bound children's heads tightly from birth to mould their skulls into the shape of the mountains from which they believed they were descended, and the mummy struck by lightning has a cone-shaped skull. The burial platforms also held offerings to the gods, including pots of food, bundles of ornate textiles, moccasins, and 35 gold, silver and shell statues, some with miniature clothes and head-dresses.

At its zenith, the Inca empire stretched 2,500 miles through Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina; but it only lasted from about 1438 to 1532 and collapsed after the last emperor, Atahualpa, was garrotted by Spanish conquistadors in 1533. *D.Telegraph*, *D.Mail*, *Guardian*, *Los Angeles Times*, 7 April; *Newsweek*, *US News & World Report*, 19 April 1999.

PHOTO: AP





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SOLE MATES: Travel writer Redmond O'Hanlon's best friend from Marlborough College burnt himself to death after a bout of depression. O'Hanlon keeps his foot in a Maxwell House-coffee jar. "I didn't want the church to have all of him," he explained. *Sunday Telegraph*, 21 Mar 1999.

LOOKING SHEEPISH: While pursuing a complaint from a farmer in Chaguanas, central Trinidad, that someone had stolen his livestock, police chased a rental car with its headlights off. The driver escaped, and police found a goat wearing a shirt, pants and a hat and a sheep wearing a dress in the back seat. There were two more goats in the trunk. *Orange County (CA) Register*, 16 May 1999.

GETTING YOUR FOX OFF: Lucy Dover, 79, was attacked by a rabid fox on 5 April when she stepped outside her mobile home in Brooksville, Florida, for a cigarette. The 15lb (6.8kg) fox knocked her to the ground, breaking her hip, before biting and clawing her. She seized it behind the neck and near the tail and held on for 12 hours until her landlord came by in the morning and beat it to death with a stick. Ms Dover was hospitalised in serious condition. *[AP]* 8 April 1999.

AUTO EROTICA: As a woman sat in her broken-down car in Teesville, Cleveland, at 6pm on 12 May, a teenager kissed and licked her windscreen before pulling down his trousers and "committing a sex act" in front of her. She blew her horn to attract help and a man leapt out of a passing car and chased the youth away. *Middlesbrough Eve. Gazette*, 14 May 1999.

FOOT OFF! José Maria Lopez, born in Mexico and living in Whittier, California, spent most of his 33 years hiding a third foot that protruded from his ankle, wearing baggy trousers to cover the 6in (15cm) appendage. After a surgeon amputated it for free, Lopez said he was feeling fantastic and looked forward to buying his first boots. *Aberdeen Eve. Express*, 13 May; *Times*, 14 May 1999.

WATER SPORT: Sir Hugh Fish, Chief Executive of the Thames Water Authority, died in June. He was the driving force behind the successful reintroduction of salmon to the Thames in 1975, after 150 years' absence. The first live salmon was hooked in 1985. *D.Telegraph*, 7 June 1999.



three relics in the limelight

As thousands gather to worship in front of a golden tabernacle holding Buddha's tooth, two other important relics come to light

A TOOTH SAID TO HAVE belonged to Gautama Buddha, normally kept hidden from public gaze in the Tooth Relic Pagoda in Beijing, was flown into Hong Kong on 21 May as part of celebrations for his 2,543rd birthday. The following day was declared a public holiday, to replace the Queen's official birthday in June.

Tung Chee-hwa, the chief executive of Hong Kong, presided over an unveiling ceremony of the relic – which insurers have refused to value or underwrite – as it went on show at the Hong Kong Coliseum, a stadium in Kowloon. Heads bowed and hands clasped in

prayer as the tooth, kept in a huge golden tabernacle, arrived in a lorry decorated to resemble a giant lotus flower. About 30,000 people a day were expected to view the relic during its week-long visit to the former British colony. While on display, the tooth was guarded by a posse of more than a dozen monks.

According to tradition, after the Buddha attained Nirvana his body was cremated and a number of teeth were found in the ashes. It is said that the Beijing tooth was brought from India in the 5th century by the monk Faxian, together with the first Buddhist scriptures. It was originally housed in the then imperial

capital of Xian and was moved to Beijing during the Tang dynasty. A second tooth is on display in Sri Lanka and a third is held by a Tibetan monk in India and was dispatched to Taiwan last year (see *FT* 16:7). Beijing insists the third one is a fake, a charge angrily denied by the Tibetan and Taiwanese authorities, who say it was saved from a monastery in Tibet in 1968, during the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution. *Guardian*, 22 May; *Sunday Telegraph*, 23 May 1999.

A GLASS CASE CONTAINING a single hair from the beard of the Prophet Mohammed (who died

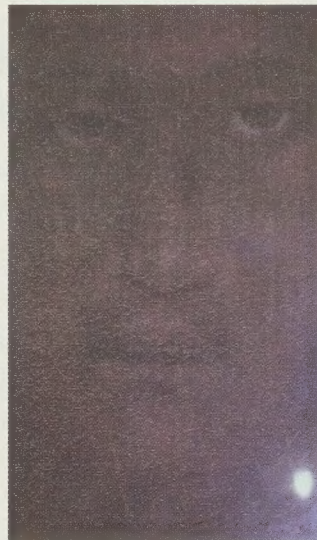
in 632) was stolen on 14 June from the Gazi Ahmet Pasa Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey, while the imam was preparing for noon prayers. It was returned hours later, left outside the mosque. The hair was given to the mosque in 1571, about the same time that several other relics of Mohammed were brought to Istanbul for safekeeping by the Ottoman sultans. Several other beard hairs, a footprint of the prophet and part of his cloak are on display in Istanbul's Topkapi palace. *[AP]* 15 June 1999.

THE 'VEIL OF VERONICA' HAS been discovered in a monastery hidden away in the Apennine Mountains of Italy, claims Heinrich Pfeiffer, professor of Christian art history at the Vatican's Gregorian University, following a 13-year search through archives.

The almost transparent piece of cloth, measuring 6.7x9.4in (17x24cm), is kept in the village of Manoppello. Father Germano, head of the Capuchin monastery there, regards it as a sacred icon with wondrous properties. Seen from certain angles, reddish-brown marks trace the face of a bearded, long-haired man, strikingly similar to the image on the Turin Shroud.

The fabric, says Pfeiffer, is the headcloth handed to Christ by a woman as he carried the cross to Calvary. Christ pressed it to his sweaty, bloody face, leaving an image, and handed it back. The Veronica Veil (also known as the vernicle) was preserved in St Peter's in Rome from the 12th century. It was the most celebrated relic in Rome and many miracles were attributed to it. The earliest mention of Veronica

appears in the apocryphal Acts of Pilate in the 2nd or 4th centuries AD. In 1608 Pope Paul V ordered the demolition of the chapel housing the relic and the cloth was removed to the Vatican's archives which list it in a catalogue, complete with a drawing. It then vanished. The Vatican, which later passed off copies of the Veronica as the original to avoid disappointing



VEILED: The veil's face is strikingly similar to that on the Turin Shroud.

pilgrims, never explained the disappearance.

According to the Monoppello monastery's records, the wife of a soldier sold the veil to a nobleman of Monoppello in 1608 to get her husband out of jail. The nobleman later gave it to the Capuchins. In 1618 it was placed between two sheets of glass and encased in a walnut frame adorned in silver and gold.

However, as with so many famous relics, there seem to be

several to choose from. In the early 20th century, Monsignor Joseph Wilpert obtained permission from Pope Pius X to examine what was preserved in St Veronica's chapel in St Peter's. According to the Benedictine scholar Maurus Green: "After removing the metal covering the two glass plates, he saw a square piece of cloth yellowed with age. Upon the cloth were two dim stains, rust-brown in colour, joined together. No image, no remnants of any image."

Green suggests that a man-made icon had once been kept over the stained cloth relic, and that this icon was probably "stolen during the sack of Rome, and in 1527, offered for sale in the taverns of the city". The Holy Prepuce (the foreskin of Christ) also left Rome at the same time in the hands of a German mercenary (see *FT* 44:8, 59:64).

Most scholars regard Pfeiffer's Veronica claim with deep scepticism. The name Veronica derives from the Latin and Greek words vera and ikon, meaning "true image". She has become the patron saint of photographers. The story of the veil doesn't appear in the Bible and it is widely believed to have been invented to explain the relic. Dr Lionel Wickham of the faculty of divinity in Cambridge describes the historical accuracy of the Veronica legend as "half way between Mickey Mouse and the Three Musketeers". Scientific tests might shed further light on the Monoppello relic, but they could destroy the delicate cloth without solving the mystery. *Maurus Green: 'Veronica and Her Veil', The Tablet*, 31 Dec 1966; *Sunday Times*, 30 May 1999; "Relics and Shrines" by David Sox, Allen & Unwin, 1985.

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SOUND DECISION: Judge Michael Gibbon sentenced Alan Rashid, 32, to two years in prison in Cardiff Crown Court for making a threat to kill. The jury had found him not guilty, but as the foreman delivered the verdict, a juror's cough drowned out the crucial word "not".

As Rashid waited for a van to take him to jail, a mystified juror asked a court usher why Rashid was being imprisoned. The court was hastily reconvened and Rashid freed. (Jurors had not spoken up earlier because they believed he had been convicted of other offences.) *Times*, *Guardian*, *D.Telegraph*, 16 May 1999.

HOME HELP YOURSELF: Ataya Rsaya, 31, was arrested in Los Angeles for burglary in January. He had reportedly broken into homes and, before leaving with valuables, had often cleaned clothes, fixed dinners, sat by a fireplace with a glass of wine and re-arranged furniture.

In June, German police were searching for a gang who raid houses and spend hours mopping, polishing and dusting. Nothing is ever taken except some food from the fridge. *[AFP]* 18 Jan; *Sunday Mail*, 13 June 1999.

NO MILLENNIUM MELTDOWN: The director of Ukraine's nuclear power industry has promised that there will be no disruption by the millennium bug. Olexander Parkhomenko said the country's nuclear plants are far too obsolete to be disrupted by computer problems. *Sunday Times*, 7 Feb 1999.

CLOUDED JUDGMENT: Fire crews in Bristol rushed to tackle a blaze on 16 April after being alerted to a huge plume of smoke, only to find it was a rain cloud. And an optical illusion that a skyscraper in Shenzhen, northern China, was falling sent thousands of people running for their lives twice in one week. Experts said that unusually fast-moving clouds created the illusion. *D.Record*, 17 April; *[AFP]* 21 May 1999.

STAMP IT OUT: The US Postal Service had to scrap 100 million stamps after a blunder. The 60-cent international stamp, showing a picture of the Grand Canyon, was captioned "Grand Canyon, Colorado". The famous gorge is actually in Arizona, although it was carved by the Colorado River. *NY Daily News*, 18 May 1999.

'Amnesiac' locates

AS REPORTED LAST ISSUE [*FT* 125:24], a man walked into a London police station last March, claiming to have lost his memory. Given truth drugs, he said he was Michael Meaga, from Iran, and gave a non-existent address in Richmond Hill.

There was general agreement among those psychiatrists and psychologists consulted that the man was a genuine amnesiac.

Dr Megahed of St Clements psychiatric hospital said the man was "unlikely to cause harm to himself or others."

The BBC decided to make a documentary for the *Inside Story* series about a man coming to terms with memory-loss. It transpired that he was an Israeli, a former clothing salesman called Erez (or Araz) Tivoni, aged 31. The corporation paid his expenses



children and then kills them

and sent a two-man TV crew to accompany him to Tel Aviv to search for his family. They paid his air fare, which was reimbursed by a London social services department.

In fact, Tivoni's wife Etti had escaped to a hostel for battered women in Tel Aviv with their two children in an effort to escape his attacks.

Tivoni had left Israel two

months later and made his way to London, where he feigned amnesia. The BBC filmed him at court hearings where he sought access to his children, but left after six days when their budget ran out.

Two weeks later, on 19 May, Tivoni was allowed to see his children at the refuge in a meeting supervised by Israeli social services.

At the end of the 90 minute visit, Tivoni asked for a short time alone with the children. He then doused his one-year-old daughter, Avital, and four-year-old son, Jeffrey, with petrol and set them alight. The baby died immediately while the boy died three weeks later.

Tivoni's trial has been set for September. *Guardian*, *D.Telegraph*, 5 July 1999.



Medical Bag



MEDICAL MARVELS FROM THE FORTEAN TIMES FILES

In mare internum

Dr Nicholas Warren investigates a Brazilian fish with a strange – and dangerous – attraction

**PARASITE:** The candirú belongs to a family of South American parasitic catfishes, the *Trichomycteridae*. Its scaleless body, about one inch (2.5cm) long, is virtually transparent, and its dorsal fin is placed well back near the tail.

One summer's day I happened to read the label on a pot of *Patum Peperium*, The Gentlemen's Relish (the original 1828 recipe, delicious on hot toast). Under the picture of a pair of anchovies, there appeared the motto *In mare internum* ("within the inner sea") conjuring up bizarre images of the anchovies swimming about inside you, the culinary equivalent of the movie *Alien*.

I had a vague recollection of a fish that really did swim about inside you. A few days later, I read a small item of correspondence (*Daily Mail*, 7 July 1997) concerning the candirú, a small South American fish, which enters the human bladder through the urethra, there to feast on human tissues and blood. It was said to be the only vertebrate human parasite, varying in length from two to nine centimeters (0.8in to 3.6in).

The human bladder is hardly a congenial environment for a teleost [bony] fish. Firstly, urine is three to four times more concentrated than the blood plasma from which it is derived. This would tend to dehydrate the fish, in much the same way that shipwreck survivors are advised not to drink their own urine. Secondly, how would the fish breathe? The question is a vexed one, since nobody actually knows the oxygen levels in human urine. Nevertheless, lesser animal parasites such as the flat worm which causes bilharzia, seem to get by.

Thoroughly perplexed, I consulted Alan Cooper's *Fishes of the World* (Hamlyn 1969, pp.74/5):

"Another unpleasant catfish is the infamous Candiru (*Vandellia*) of the fresh waters of South America, which has been reported as entering the urinary opening of human bathers. Once it has entered, it erects its spines and it is impossible to remove without surgery; this may have fatal results. These little fish normally enter the gill chambers of larger fishes and feed on their gills." The

spines referred to are a pair on the fish's "snout"; its length is given as two inches (5cm).

I did some historical research. One of the first published reports occurs in a 1829 work by the greatest ichthyologist of them all, Louis Agassiz. In a preface, C F P Von Martinus states: "The Brazilians call this fish *Candiru*, the Spaniards living in the province of Maynas (Peru) name it *Canero* (Flesh-eater). By a singular instinct it is incited to enter the excretory openings of the human body when it can get at those parts in those who are bathing in the river [...] These little fishes are strongly attracted by the odour of urine and consequently the dwellers in these parts, when about to go into the river Amazon, in whose bays this pest abounds, constrict the prepuce with a string and refrain from urinating."

In 1836 E Poepig wrote the following account of a Peruvian plant called *Xagua*: "The fresh juice of the *Xagua* is rightfully claimed to be the surest means of killing and getting rid of these two-inch-long little fishes which slip into the outer openings of the careless (unprotected) bathers and bring about the most dreadful accidents... I myself have been an eyewitness of such a case. An Indian woman, after the penetration by a Canero into the vagina, suffered such a frightful pain and loss of blood that she was given up to die. However, after both internal and external application of *Xagua*, the little fish was gotten out and the woman came through alive."

In 1855 Castlenau described specimens 3.6 inches (9cm) long with the following characteristics: "Fishermen... claim that it is very dangerous to urinate in the river, because, they allege, this little animal launches itself out of the water and penetrates the urethra by ascending the length of the liquid column."

Matters came to a head at the end of the 19th century. In 1897, at a meeting of the Zoological Society of London, G A Boulenger,

curator of fishes at the British Museum, exhibited specimens of the South American catfish known scientifically as *Vandellia cirrhosa*, collected by J Bach, a South American physician, in a tributary of the Amazon. The report reads:

"The Candiru is much dreaded by the natives of the Jurua district, who, in order to protect themselves, rarely enter the river without covering their genitalia by means of a sheath... The fish is attracted by the urine, and once it has made its way into the urethra, cannot be pulled out again owing to the spines which arm its opercles. The only means of preventing it from reaching the bladder, where it causes inflammation and ultimately death, is to instantly amputate the penis. At Tres Unidors, Dr Bach had actually examined a man and three boys with amputated penes as a result of their dreadful accident."

Dr Ammerman, a US Naval Surgeon stationed in 1910-11 on the Madeira River in South America, said he had operated to remove candirús two or three times. On one occasion, he made a suprapubic opening into the bladder to remove the fish, which had penetrated into that organ.

In 1911 J Pelligren noted that: "Some of the species of the *Pygidiidae* called *Candiru* attach themselves to any kind of fish or animal including man... they... gorge themselves on its blood. The fishes brought into the market at Manaus often show many wounds inflicted by the *Candirus*. Below the first fall in the Madeira River it is difficult to take a catfish which has not been bitten several times by the *Candirus*."

A Hamilton Rice, an Amazonian explorer from New York City, reported: "In May 1920 at the Portuguese Beneficente Hospital in Manaus, I saw a boy of ten or eleven years of age whose entire penis had been snipped off." This time, the amputation is attributed to a piranha fish (*Serrasalmus*).

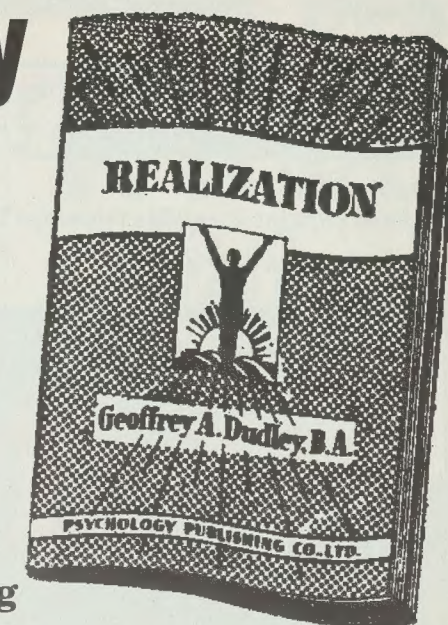
COMMENT BY DR JONATHAN JEFFERY, research fellow at St George's Hospital, London, A FOSSIL FISH EXPERT:

The candirú homes in on urine because it's a parasite of the gill chamber of larger fish, and fish excrete much of their urea over the gills. It is thus trying to find the gill chamber, not human bladders. Once inside, I don't think it feeds much. Its principal reaction is to die, because of the high temperature, low oxygen and toxic concentrations of urea. In its death throes it erects spines and may damage the urethra.

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Weird Science



EXPLORING THE FINAL FRONTIER

Paul Parsons turns his telescope towards this month's collection of heavenly bodies. He can be contacted at pparsons@pavilion.co.uk.

Martian magnetism



The surface of the planet Mars was once just like that of the Earth, according to new data returned by NASA's Mars Global Surveyor probe. Instruments on the spacecraft have detected a large number of magnetic strips across the surface of the planet, which scientists studying the data say closely resemble the magnetic scars

seen on Earth as a result of continental drift. This could mean that Mars' crust was once composed of a number of continental plates. The scientists say that if this is the case, then Mars' interior must have cooled since then, turning the planet into the plateless, geologically extinct world that it is today. [AP] 29 April 1999.

Moon chip

Astronomers in America have located a 50 metre (164ft) chunk of rock orbiting the Sun which they think is a chip off the Moon. It was first thought that the boulder, which orbits the Sun every 1.09 years, was a spacecraft which had somehow escaped the grasp of the Earth's gravity. But astronomers soon realised that the object was simply too big for this explanation. Scientists have known for some years that fragments of rock do escape from the Moon, having found 12 meteorites on Earth which match the composition of Moon rock. The astronomers now hope to determine the composition of the orbiting fragment, by studying the spectrum of its light. *New Scientist*, 27 Feb 1999.

Meteor mystery

Last November, everyone had a good laugh at astronomers who sat up all night waiting for the Leonid meteor storm, only to discover that the spectacle had already taken place – some 16 hours earlier than expected. Now a team of researchers has figured out why that was. The Leonid meteors are caused as the Earth passes through the stream of dust in the tail of comet Tempel-Tuttle. Each time the comet moves into the inner Solar System, its icy structure gets softened by the Sun's heat, causing bits of it to break off. The researchers calculate that the early display seen on 17 November 1998 was caused by a packet of material fragments that broke off of the comet in September 1333. The bright 'normal' display expected last year is now

due this November. *Royal Astronomical Society News Release*, 15 April 1999.

Engage!

Star Trek-style warp drives might be possible after all. In 1994, physicist Miguel Alcubierre showed how an advanced civilisation could build a faster-than-light spaceship by distorting space and time. But then, in 1997, two American scientists seemingly ruled it out, saying it demanded more of its special negative energy fuel than there is matter in the entire visible universe. Now Chris Van Den Broeck of the Catholic University of Leuven has modified Alcubierre's design, placing the warp drive inside a special kind of space-time bubble. If you do this, found Van Den Broeck, then only a gram (0.03oz) of negative energy matter is required. For the moment scientists don't know how to manufacture, even this small quantity, but it's at least feasible that one day they might. *New Scientist*, 12 June 1999.

Fade to pink

A group of astronomers in Australia have discovered black holes that are pink. The team, from the Australian National University, believe that the pink colour isn't coming from the holes themselves, but rather the clouds of gas and dust surrounding them. The intense gravity of a black hole compresses this material as it's pulled in, say the team, heating it up and making it glow with a pink hue. It took the team the combined power of four of the world's largest telescopes to find the pink holes. Lying in distant galaxies billions of light years away, the holes are

100,000 times fainter than anything the unaided human eye can see. *Guardian*, 10 May 1999.

A billion and something

Ever since the now-renowned Hubble Space Telescope first appeared on spacecraft designers' drawing boards, one of its main objectives was to determine the age of the Universe. Now it's finally produced the goods. Astronomers using the telescope announced in May that the cosmos was born roughly 12 billion years ago. Previous estimates, obtained using other telescopes, have ranged between 10 billion and 20 billion years, but scientists say the new figure from Hubble is the most accurate determination yet. So much so, the find has been hailed as the most important breakthrough in cosmology in 70 years – since American astronomer Edwin Hubble, who the telescope is named after, discovered the expansion of the Universe itself. *Independent*, 26 May 1999.

Mars goes pear-shaped

The surface of Mars has now been mapped to a better accuracy than many regions of the Earth, by NASA's Mars Global Surveyor satellite. Among its finds is the fact that Mars' southern hemisphere is on average about 3 miles (5km) higher than the north, making the planet slightly pear-shaped. A group of scientists presenting the results from the spacecraft in a recent issue of the journal *Science* say it's likely that this deformation was produced by extensive volcanic activity in the planet's northern hemisphere. The team also provided the first accurate measurements of the Hellas basin in the planet's southern hemisphere, finding it deep enough to swallow Mount Everest. *Times*, 29 May 1999.

Here today, gone tomorrow

An asteroid which could strike the Earth in just under 50 years' time has been lost, admitted red-faced astronomers in June. The object, called 1998 OX₄, was first located by a group from the University of Arizona who tracked it for two weeks. The data the astronomers gathered predicted that the asteroid would pass close to the Earth in 2046, with a one-in-ten-million chance of striking. The group were hoping to relocate 1998 OX₄ again and join its position with their original data to provide a more accurate plot of its future path. But their original data proved insufficiently accurate to find the asteroid and its location is now a mystery. *Times*, 14 June 1999.

Carnage on Easter Island

Legions of ants have decimated the crab population of Easter Island while their deadly cousins have started to march on the US.

JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS, up to 120 million crabs, mostly the famous red crab (*Gecarcoidea natalis*), staged the world's biggest love-in on the beaches and cliff tops of Easter Island, as they do every year around that time. "As soon as the rains come, the crabs – millions of them – boil out of the ground in minutes," said Dr Steve Morris from the University of Sydney. The mating ritual takes up to six weeks.

Although land-based, red crabs can only hatch their fertilised larvae into the sea. They follow precise co-ordinates to reach their chosen love nest and return to their jungle homes with pinpoint accuracy, year after year. Since they live up to 30 years, they cover considerable distances in their lifetime.

Human settlement and phosphate mining on the island, an external Australian territory about 350km (217 miles) south of Java, reduced the crab's predators to the goshawk, the robber crab, which weighs up to 8lb (3.6kg) and grows to the size of a small dog, and the car, which squashes about 15 per cent of the crabs on the roads annually.

However, in the last 18

months, the "crazy ant" (*Anoplolepis gracilipes*) – so-called because of its frenetic movements – has gone berserk and devoured about three million red crabs, which can weigh up to a pound (0.45kg).

Because the ants also feed on sugar secretion produced by sap-sucking scale insects, they protect this source of food from its natural predators. Scale insects are consequently flourishing, causing more and more of the forest canopy to die back, allowing a dense undergrowth of seedlings to grow and threatening several species with extinction, particularly the Christmas Island shrew, and birds including Abbot's booby, the Christmas Island hawk owl and frigate bird.

The sudden carnage is a mystery. The crazy ant, originally from West Africa but distributed throughout the tropics by traders, has been living on Christmas Island since the 1930s at least, and yet it has become a menace only recently. One theory links the slaughter to an el Niño that caused a prolonged drought, and subsequent plant stress, in 1997. *Sunday Telegraph*, 20 Dec 1998; *New Scientist*, 27 Mar 1999.



GETTING CRABBY: Millions of red crabs journey to Easter Island to mate each year. Umwary tourists discover that they don't seem to let any obstacle get in their way!

MEANWHILE, DEADLY FIRE ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) are on the march across the USA, having arrived from South America in the early part of this century.

Their venom has killed dozens of people in the southern states, and caused damage to crops, lawns and electrical equipment estimated at £1.5 billion a year. Their most recent victim was a woman in a nursing home in Jackson, Mississippi, who died last September.

After swarming onto a human victim, the ants are believed to emit an alarm pheromone, at which point they all sting at once, causing maximum pain. Most fatalities occur in those who cannot escape, such as the elderly and babies in cribs.

A hybrid strain which seems able to withstand cold weather was found in California last December, far from the ants' traditional areas, which stretch from Florida to Texas. They travel across country on livestock or bundle into giant balls which can float down flooded rivers.

Scientists are now importing a parasitic fly from South America that can wriggle inside the quarter-inch long ant and lay its egg. When the larva hatches, they move into the ant's head where they feed until the head falls off. Faced with the fly, the normally fearless ant recoils and races towards its mound.

Tests are also being carried out on a micro-organism from Brazil which, if implanted into a fire ant nest, sickens the ants, slows their reproduction and causes the queen ant to produce fewer eggs.

D. Telegraph, 16 Dec 1998; *Los Angeles Times*, 11 Feb 1999.

wired
for
weird

This month, Dave Walsh casts his line into the rushing streams of data and peers at what wriggles on his hook.



DEALEY PLAZA CAM

And about time too. Live from Dallas, photos from the 'sniper's perch' in the Book Depository, where "an assassin is alleged to have fired the shots that killed President John F. Kennedy". A particularly high quality webcam, it actually alternates between various views, including the infamous 'Grassy Knoll'. <http://www2.earthcam.com/jfk/>

SUBTERRANEA BRITANNICA

'A society devoted to the study and investigation of man-made and man-used underground places', this website is full of photos and reports on dozens of British cold war bunkers. <http://www.stomix.demon.co.uk/sub-brit/>

INEXPLICATA – THE JOURNAL OF HISPANIC UFOLOGY

Edited by Scott Corrales, and with writers from Spain, Puerto Rico and Mexico, *Inexplicata* provide a much needed source of fortetana from the Latin world. Written in relaxed and amused English, *Inexplicata* will hopefully put paid to the cultural bias of some English speaking researchers (as mentioned by Loren Coleman, *FT*121:41). <http://www.inexplicata.com/>

TASTE

An "online journal devoted to transcendent experiences that scientists have reported". It lets scientists express these experiences in a safe space, collects and shares them to debunk the idea stereotype that 'real' scientists don't have 'spiritual' or 'mystical experiences'. *Taste* campaigns against the image of science that pervades public perception. <http://issc-taste.org/index.html>

Dave Walsh is a hard-bitten desperado on the lam from the law and is currently hiding in Arbour Hill, Dublin. He even runs a website, Blather at <http://www.blather.net>.





KARL SHUKER'S

alien ZOO

PINK OCTOPUS ON PARADE

They say the camera never lies, but it can certainly spring some extraordinary surprises on its unsuspecting human operators. In June 1999, Inverness-based marine biologist Dr Gordon Williamson revealed that he had recently viewed a remarkable film given to him by the operator of a safety camera on a Mobil Oil ship working in the sea approximately 120 miles (193km) northwest of the Shetland Islands.

The camera had been scanning just above the seafloor, at a depth of 3,800ft (1,158m), looking for traces of pollution, when it filmed a bizarre bright pinkish-red octopus-like creature. At first, the creature had resembled a crinoline, but within two seconds it had changed shape, transforming into a swift-moving cigar-like entity propelled by two fins. Now nicknamed 'the pink fairy', it is believed by Williamson to be a species of cirrate octopus, but its precise identity remains undetermined and it may be new to science.

Electronic Telegraph, 23 June 1999.

A MICRO-DEER MARVEL

In FT115's 'Alien Zoo', I reported conservationist Dr Alan Rabinowitz's discovery in Myanmar (formerly Burma) of a minuscule deer, known locally as the leaf muntjac, which could well be a species new to science. This has now been officially confirmed by DNA sequencing, conducted via a collaborative effort between the Wildlife Conservation Society based at New York's Bronx Zoo and the Molecular Systematics Laboratory of the American Museum of Natural History. Moreover, standing just 20in

Crying elephant dies of grief

Two recent news stories indicate that we may have more in common with elephants than we may have thought – physically and emotionally...



FOR 24 DAYS, DAMINI REFUSED to move, eat or drink. Despite the attention of a series of experts, the 72-year-old elephant seemed determined to die, her heart apparently broken by the death of a close companion. On 5 May, she passed away in her enclosure at the Prince of Wales Zoo in Lucknow, northern India, her loose skin hanging over her protruding bones, bed sores covering her body.

Damini arrived at the zoo in 1998 after being confiscated from

owners who were illegally transporting her. She was alone in her new home for five months until September, when a pregnant younger elephant called Champakali arrived from Dudhwa National Park, 310 miles (500km) southeast of New Delhi, on a kind of maternity leave. The two elephants became inseparable; such attachments are common, with the older elephant caring for the younger, especially in pregnancy.

When Champakali died on 11

April giving birth to a stillborn calf, Damini shed tears and stood still for days, barely nibbling at the two tonnes of sugar-cane, bananas and grass heaped in front of her. Her legs swelled and eventually gave way, leaving her lying on her side, head and ears drooping, trunk curled. Tears rolled down her face constantly and the four-tonne animal rapidly lost weight.

A week before she died, Damini stopped eating and drinking entirely. She was cooled

with a water spray and fans as she lay in a makeshift tent of fragrant medicinal grass. "It will take me some time to get over the death of my two loved ones," said Kamaal, the elephant keeper. [AP] 7 May 1999.

SCIENTISTS IN MELBOURNE who have been examining elephant fetuses reported in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* in the USA on 10 May that they believed elephants (the only surviving Proboscidiens) were once aquatic. The evidence is in the kidneys, testes, trunk and lungs of the elephant in the first months of gestation, which point to a link with the *Sirenia* (sea cows) – the dugongs and manatees. Elephants also possess similar teeth to *Sirenia*, and at a molecular level they have genetic features in common. The aquatic origin of elephants will come as no surprise to readers of Elaine Morgan (*The Descent of Woman, The Aquatic Ape*, etc), who has spent the last quarter century arguing that both elephants and humans had an aquatic past, accounting for their hairlessness, subcutaneous fat, and (among other traits) their ability to cry.

The Melbourne group – Prof Marilyn Renfree, Prof Roger Short, and doctoral student Ann Gaeth – studied an embryo and six fetuses ranging from 58 to 166 days old, taken from elephants culled in South Africa's Kruger National Park. All had nephrostomes, little funnel-shaped kidney ducts found in no other African or Asian mammals – but present in freshwater fish, frogs, in the first developmental stages of birds, in egg-laying reptiles and in the rare egg-laying mammals.



The foetal lungs also looked like the lungs of aquatic creatures, and the testicles were tucked away inside the animal – another clue to a watery origin, because if testicles get too cold, sterility threatens. Seals and whales also have internal testicles, but their land-living ancestors did not. Even the youngest elephant foetus had a well-developed trunk, a shape that may have evolved to serve as a breathing tube. Elephants today still use their

trunks as snorkels when swimming in deep water.

Palaeontologists recently discovered that ancestors of the elephant crossed from North to South America 10 million years ago, millions of years before a land bridge existed between the two land masses, and before any other species is known to have crossed the gap.

The Melbourne scientists' conclusions clearly depend upon Ernst Haeckel's assumption in the 1890s that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny – simply put, foetal development follows the same path as the evolutionary development of the species concerned – an hypothesis dented in 1997 by the discovery that Haeckel had faked many of his illustrations to fit his argument [FT105:10].

Back in 1979, it was suggested in *New Scientist* that the Loch Ness Monster was a swimming elephant. As FT correspondent Mike Crowley pointed out [FT30:67], the ancient Picts, known for their naturalistic depictions of animals, have left an enigmatic carving known to archaeologists as 'the Pictish Beast' or 'swimming elephant'. Was this perhaps a portrait of Nessie? *New Scientist*, 20 June 1996; *Guardian*, *D.Telegraph*, *D.Mail*, *Eastern Daily Press*, 11 May; *Courier Mail* (Brisbane), 12 May 1999.



KARL SHUKER'S

alien ZOO

(51cm) at the shoulder and weighing no more than 25lb (11kg) even when adult, this latest southeast Asian revelation has also been recognised as the world's smallest species of deer. It now awaits a formal scientific name and description. <http://www.wcs.org/leafdeer.html>

CZ BIBLIOGRAPHY

In response to popular demand, I have compiled and placed online a comprehensive listing of cryptozoological and zoomythological books on my website for ready access by fellow researchers. Currently, this provides full bibliographical details for 556 separate volumes. Details of further books, especially foreign-language and newly-published tomes, would be greatly appreciated. Check it out at: <http://members.aol.com/karlshuker/>

NOT SO LUCKY, AFTER ALL

In January 1999, a small frog named Lucky died of old age, and with its death Britain lost a whole species of native animal. For Lucky, captured in a small Norfolk pool back in 1993, was the last-known specimen of pool frog *Rana lessonae* known to exist in Britain. People have since claimed to know where other specimens can still be found. Ironically, it had traditionally been assumed that the pool frog had been introduced to Britain from the continent by Victorian collectors less than two centuries ago. However, in early 1999, just prior to Lucky's death, Coventry University zoologist Dr Chris Gleed-Owen had discovered the thigh bone of a pool frog at Chopdike Grove, Lincolnshire, which is a Saxon settlement dating from 600–950 AD. *Times*, *Eastern Daily Press*, 14 Jan 1999.

Witch hunt for worshippers

BOB BARR, A RIGHT WING

Republican congressman from Georgia, is incensed at the Pentagon allowing pagan rituals to be practised on US military bases. In August 1997, Fort Hood near Austin, Texas, America's largest military outpost, became the first to sanction the practice of the Wicca religion. Since then, at least five other installations have followed suit, including Fort Polk, Louisiana; Fort Wainwright, Arkansas; and Kadena Base in Okinawa. Thirteen installations and two



Navy ships are home to Wiccan study groups. Fort Hood's Wicca group, Open Circle – numbering from 40 to 200 – hold twice-weekly evening classes on such subjects as lunar cycles and the meaning of a coven. They conduct rituals at a Boy Scout camp on base every full moon and on the eight fire festivals of the year. They wear hooded robes, chant to the lead of their chosen high priestess, and dance around a fire well into the night.

A handbook for Army chaplains includes the Church of Satan among groups allowed to

worship. Christian zealots habitually confuse Wiccans with Satanists, even though the former have no connections with the Christian Satan. By June, 13 conservative Christian groups were demanding that Christians boycott the Army, refuse to join up or re-enlist until the "satanic rituals" are outlawed. Barr is threatening hearings and legislation, but so far the Army brass has just shrugged off the complaints. *Int. Herald Tribune*, *Irish Times*, 9 June; *Austin (TX) American Statesman*, 10 June; *Independent*, 11 June; *US News & World Report*, 14 June; *The Record* (Hackensack, NJ), 18 June 1999.



Apocalyptic products

AS OUTLINED IN THE FT EDITORIAL LAST ISSUE, JAPAN IS CURRENTLY obsessed with Nostradamus and his obscure prediction for the seventh month of this year. The lingerie firm Triumph International Japan is exploiting the country's doomsday obsession with the "Armageddon Bra" (left), a high-tech brassiere that alerts its wearer to incoming missiles. It includes a sensor on the shoulder strap and a control box to warn of objects falling from the skies [but probably not fish! Eds]. For maximum efficiency, it should be worn without outer garments. *Times*, 13 May 1999.

YORDAN PLATIKANOV, A PROMINENT BULGARIAN BREWING expert, has produced a non-alcoholic "beer" that allegedly protects the drinker from harmful radiation effects. Produced at the Lomsko Pivo Brewery of Lom in northwestern Bulgaria and made of herbs and mineral water, the beer is said to neutralise the content of strontium and uranium 134 left by radiation in the human body. The research was funded by Bulgaria's defence and health ministries. In 1993, there was another report of a Bulgarian brew said to protect against radiation [FT73:8]. [Xinhua] 20 July 1997.



The art of long distance learning

Remote viewing is one of the most intriguing and controversial of all psychical phenomena. MARK PILKINGTON experienced the process at first hand and transmitted this report from a distance.



ON TARGET: How close can the students get?

Harrow-on-the-Hill, North London, 8.45am. The nondescript grey and brick red suburban high street teems with office life, oblivious to the remarkable team of time-and-space cadets currently assembling in the foyer of, appropriately enough, a mobile communications company. We had been assembled by Todd Rott, a mobile phone salesman who, in a move that certainly has its own inherent logic, has set up Realtime Promotions to conduct training and experimentation in remote viewing (RV).

In the years since the CIA first released information on their more than 20-year investigations into the phenomenon, a host of "experts" have sprung up, offering training courses and insights under guises such as

Controlled, Scientific and Technical Remote Viewing. Many claim to be refugees from the US Intelligence programme – some of them are. Our instructor for this course, Prudence Calabrese, had been a mathematician and an entomologist, performing brain transplants on ants, before she became involved with one of the most controversial of all RV groups, Courtney Brown's Farsight Institute. It was the Farsight Institute's team, Calabrese among them, who, in late 1996, described the huge object containing benevolent aliens on a "mission of awakening", that was alleged to be trailing the comet Hale Bopp. This, of course, was the signal that lead Heaven's Gate to take their one-way ticket into outer space (see *FT* 99:32 and 100:34-41).

Nowadays Calabrese, an immediately likeable, slightly dizzy, 33-year old Californian, runs her own RV company, Transdimensional Systems. Through this she has looked at future technologies for corporate clients, trained curious senators and intelligence personnel, done detective work with the FBI, and gone treasure-hunting for private individuals. Calabrese is open about her time at Farsight, during which she became its vice-president. She admits that they got carried away with their "esoteric" targets, Brown often engaging in "flights of fantasy". "What I participated in over the course of a year and a half," she writes in her memoirs of the group, "was nothing less than the manipulation of the public's

mind, not by outright lying, but by the selective representation, improper analysis, and over-blown presentation style of RV data." Some day, she hopes, "we may be able to figure out ways to tell what is real."

There were nine of us in all, seated around a smart boardroom table. Some had undergone previous RV training with ex-military viewers Wayne Carr and Lyn Buchanan – for the most part, their results would be consistently more impressive than the rest of ours. The class is all male, but this is something Calabrese is accustomed to. Perhaps it's the militaristic connotations of the process, or perhaps it's just too much fun for many women: according to Calabrese it's not unusual for them to experience spontaneous orgasm during an RV session. Sadly, the same doesn't appear to hold true for men, but I plan to keep a close eye on everybody.

Our training begins with a battery of psychological tests. Judging by the bewildering, contradictory nature of some of the questions, I presume these were intended to baffle us into a psychically submissive state. So what sort of personality is most conducive to remote viewing? An intuitive, perceptive, emotional introvert – making up less than one per cent of the population, and also, not surprisingly, very similar to what Kenneth Ring and others have termed the Encounter-Prone Personality, one who is likely to experience paranormal phenomena in their many numinous forms.

"RV is a pseudo-science," begins Calabrese. "There's no testable hypothesis, but we can take a phenomenological approach, measuring the results after the fact." Like all sciences and pseudo-sciences, the RV process is replete with its own rules, structure and terminology, and each of the systems has its own variations. Calabrese's uses language designed to free itself of the militaristic affectations so beloved of other trainers. The process is one of refining and distilling information, taking the images and thoughts that enter your mind and reducing them to a definable form. "You'll start with small pieces, but need to zoom out to get the whole picture," says Calabrese.

THE PROCESS

Someone opens an envelope containing a picture, a place name or an event – the objective. No words or signals are exchanged, we just receive the command: "Prepare to access the objective". Here we perform a psyche-cleansing scribble, which, claims Calabrese, can actually

often be quite revealing. In one case, when viewing the Clinton and Lewinsky affair, her subjects all draw phalluses. In one of my own later sessions, I drew what was clearly a woman in a dress – the objective, I later discovered, was "The viewer's past life." Next we draw an ideogram: one of six squiggles in a gestalt language representing "everything in the known universe" – either a mountain, water, a flat surface, a structure, a living thing, or movement.

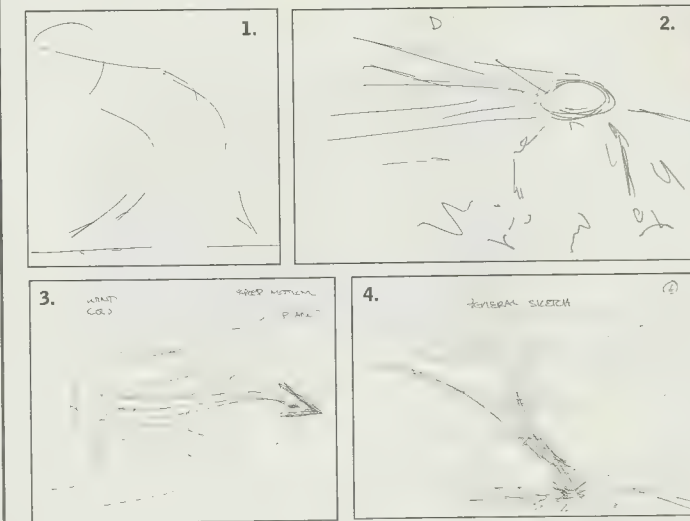
Here things become a little strange: taking your pen, you "probe" the ideogram, to assess its density, then its "topologicals" (ie its shape). Uncertain what I was supposed to be focusing on, I found this aspect extremely difficult, and more than a little absurd. Perhaps I lack imagination, but every time I pressed my pen into the squiggle on the paper I got the same result: paper, piled on top of other sheets, is always firm, but gently yielding. An initial sketch follows, along with general written impressions. The process is repeated as many times as is considered necessary (usually two or three), allowing for more precision and detail, followed by a summary.

Here the procedure can end, though a more advanced technique involves the formation of a "matrix", another way of breaking down the received information into a number of categories. "Nothing you pick up is wrong, it's all related to the objective. It's just your deductions that are wrong." It should be pointed out that, while in the initial sessions Calabrese would inspect our work-in-progress and make comment, for the most part there was little or no interaction between viewer(s) and sender.

The whole procedure usually took about 40 minutes, but in the weird, indeterminate state entered when "opening your mind" in such a fashion, time literally ceases to exist, and the 40 minutes feels like moments. It's a difficult thing to describe, and at times I couldn't help feeling like a blind Inuit feeling my way round an elephant. With no idea what I was aiming at or for, I felt myself floundering helplessly in

THE BOMBING OF DRESDEN, 13 FEBRUARY, 1945

VIEWER: DAVE "ENIGMA"



The images speak for themselves. Some key words used included: "Fast, powerful, movement, red, yellow, cold, dark. Light, fire, energy, spiral, vortex, wind." Dresden was consumed by firestorms generated by high winds.

idea-space, trying, probably too hard, to come up with something, anything, I could get down on paper.

THE RESULTS

My main problem with the procedure and the results is that it's very easy after the fact, for those who know what the objective was, to point out how closely it matches the viewers' drawings and perceptions. But someone unaware of the target would be unlikely to make an accurate appraisal from the clues offered. Most viewers will say that this is a matter of experience, but as it stands, I found it hard to see a practical application for the process. It could, however, be useful as a way of verifying or expanding upon limited information, say in a military intelligence context.

Speaking to other members of the group, I learned of some other possible uses. One pair had their eye on both the lottery and the stock market.

Another concern was whether what we were doing was actually remote viewing at all. If even one person in the room knows what the target is, then surely we're dealing with a telepathic phenomenon – no less impressive to be sure, but not RV in the usually accepted sense. For a start the viewing isn't exactly remote – the "sender" of the information being only a few feet away. Unfortunately, we didn't perform any double blind experiments – when neither the viewer nor anyone else knew what the target was.

Regardless of such doubts, unless the whole event was set up for this reporter – and I don't feel this to be the case – what I witnessed was remarkable. Somehow elements of the target did appear to be transferred from sender to viewer. Perhaps, as some have pointed out, it was all a process of subtle suggestion, through encouragement and body language, but for the most part the viewers weren't even looking at the sender, let alone communicating with him or her.

It's easy to see why the US military spent so much time and money investigating RV phenomena. After just a few days, the results the team achieved were undeniably fascinating, and more than a little mysterious.

Contact Realtime Promotions on 0800 594 2587.

RESOURCES

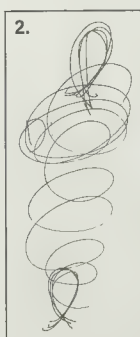
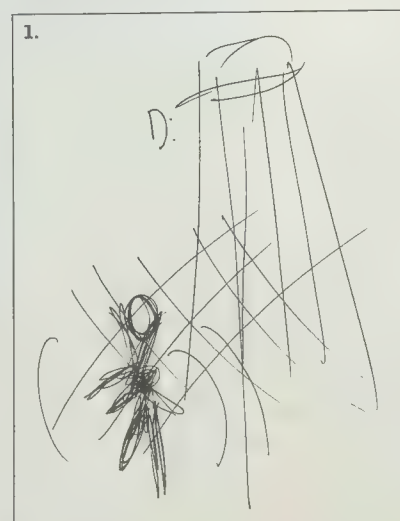
RECOMMENDED SURFING

KEY WEBSITES ON THIS SUBJECT

www.remotelyviewing.co.uk
Todd Rott and Realtime Promotions
www.largeruniverse.com
Prudence Calabrese
stargate-subscribe@groups.com
Contact to join the RV mailing list

THE LAST VICTIM OF JACK THE RIPPER

VIEWER: TODD ROTT



After firmly drawing an apparently feminine stick figure, perhaps under a street light (1), Todd was immediately distressed. He wrote: "fear, danger, anger, hiding, afraid, crouched. This is wrong! Wet, cold, low, beating". He drew another figure, then an ascending spiral (2), with the words: "calmer, presence, help is here." Out loud he spoke: "These are the last moments of somebody's life." More writing: "Dark, moist, wet, salty, cool, metallic, white, red, black." Then: "Monsters, death, calm." Suddenly, he burst into tears and left the room. "It was so real," he told me afterwards, "it was just black. I felt like I was in a theatre watching it."

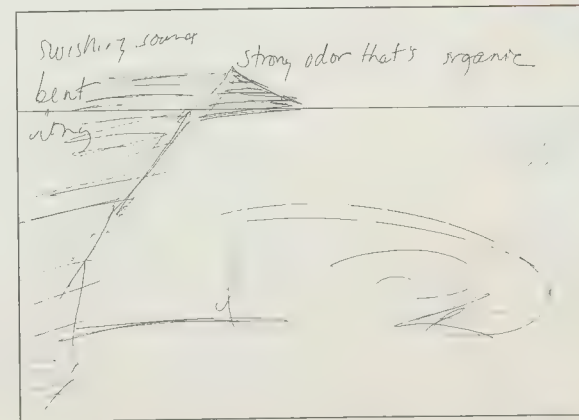


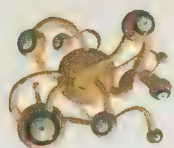
SHAMU, THE KILLER WHALE, SEA WORLD, FLORIDA USA

VIEWER: PRUDENCE CALABRESE

Prudence's descriptions included: "Strong odour that's organic; swishing, drippy sound; warm; green; spraying; salty smell; humid, sticky, itchy; ocean, recreational, hurricane, SE USA, Florida, Pensacola beach. It's sandy and near water, subject is diving or somersaulting or twirling into a medium that's salty. Like a dolphin jumping in the H₂O." Then we reach a deeper level:

"Subject has low-level internal conflict, like self esteem issues. Subject's state of mind feels animalistic. Subject does not enjoy what he is doing, but would rather be doing something else." And finally: "Subject's breakfast was white and creamy."



Extra
ExtraHEADLINES FROM
NEWSPAPERS
AROUND THE WORLDDIVORCE LEAVES MAN
BLIND

Sunday Times (South Africa), 9 Nov 1997.

WOMAN FLUSHES TOILET,
THEN CATCHES FIRE

Rocky Mountain News, 20 May 1998.

FLOWERS TO EASE
FAMINE

Scunthorpe Eve. Telegraph, 23 May 1998.

DISILLUSIONED ANGEL
WARNS OF TOO MUCH
PRESSURE

Western Mail, 23 May 1998.

HARROWING, HUNGRY
VOYAGE FOR 22 ALIENS

New York Daily News, 2 June 1998.

SAND FOUND ON BEACH
SHOCKER

Hartlepool Mail, 8 June 1998.

SLOW PROGRESS FOR
ROTTING ESTATE VICTIMSGlossop (Derbyshire) Advertiser,
11 June 1998.SCIENTISTS FIND 'CURE'
FOR SEX-CHANGE FISH

Eve. Standard (London), 11 June 1998.

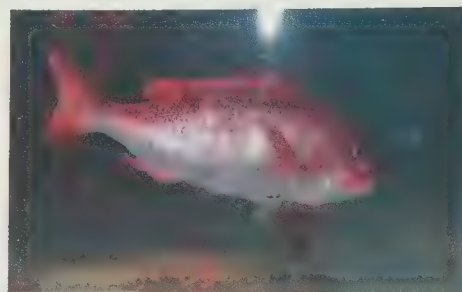
MOLE'S CONVICTION IS
QUASHED

Wiltshire Times, 12 June 1998.

NASA TO SPEND \$1B ON
ASTERIODSBrisbane (Australia) Courier Mail,
17 June 1998.

Robopets – man's best friend?

Once a sci-fi staple, cyber animals may soon be the answer for city dwellers as well as providing the technology for the latest weapon



SCIENTISTS AT MITSUBISHI HEAVY INDUSTRIES IN Hiroshima, Japan, have developed a fascinating sideline to their main goal of building oscillating fins for ships and submarines – robot fish. The lifesize, 23-inch (60cm), 6lb (2.7kg) replica seabream – four years and \$1 million in the making – are computer controlled and can swim at up to 10in (25cm) per second, steered and propelled by their pectoral and tail fins. The fish are powered by an internal coil which draws energy from an electromagnetic field pulsed permanently into the tank. Head researcher Yuzzi Terada next hopes to get the fish responding to visual and aural stimuli, making them the perfect pet or museum exhibit. After that he plans to recreate a coelacanth, followed by extinct fish from the pre-Cambrian era. My Little Trilobite anyone? *New Scientist*, 29 May 1999; *ABC-NEWS.com*, 3 June 1999.

A ROBOTIC DOG THAT WILL CHASE BALLS AND sticks, has its tail and go for walks with its owner has gone on sale in Japan and America. Called Aibo (Japanese for 'partner' or 'pal'), the cyber canine, developed by Sony, has four instincts and six emotions. When angry, its eyes turn red and it backs away from the object or person that is irritating it. Although it has love, search and movement instincts, its strongest impulse is its recharge instinct when it will whine until its batteries are replenished. It com-

municates with barks, but can also sing in both English and Japanese. Its character can be moulded by its owner in response to praise, stroking, disapproval and scolding.

Thanks to voice-recognition technology, Aibo responds best to its master's voice. In response to questions, lamps in its eyes light up either green or red to indicate yes or no, or whether it is pleased or displeased. An internal video camera and an infra-red distance sensor enable Aibo to avoid obstacles. Touch sensors are able to detect whether it is being stroked or slapped. The initial price will be around 250,000 yen (£1,550). *BBC Online*, 11 May; *D.Telegraph*, *D.Mail*, 12 May; *Sunday Telegraph*, 16 May 1999.

FOLLOWING RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN BRAIN implant technology that gave a paralysed man the ability to communicate through a computer [see *FT* 12:17], military scientists in the US are said to be working on electrodes that could be used to remotely-control animals, such as rats, on the battlefield. Such creatures, who, unlike robots, would have no difficulties scampering over hostile terrain, could then spread diseases, carry out surveillance or even gnaw through vital enemy wiring.

Cybernetics expert Professor Kevin Warwick of Reading University says that reversing the process of "electronic telepathy", so that commands are sent to rather than from the brain, is certainly within the realms of possibility. Of course, as mind-control researchers would point out, this has already been happening for years. In 1964, Professor Jose Delgado, notorious for his missionary zeal about the behavioural-conditioning possibilities of implant technology, famously stopped a bull in its tracks using only a remote control handset [see *FT* 95:38].

Various animals have been used in the past for military purposes, including dogs, dolphins, donkeys and, if one World War II Nazi plan had come to fruition, carrier pigeons [see *FT* 124:12]. *Scotsman*, 28 June 1999.

New cathedral sighting of rare tick

ARGAS REFLEXUS, ONE OF BRITAIN'S RAREST ticks, has been sighted in Britain only a few times since it was first found in 1871, and only in Canterbury Cathedral, Rochester Cathedral, and the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge. These edifices offer plenty of hiding places and flocks of pigeons. Pigeon blood is what this tick lives on.

Earlier this year, Canon Peter Brett spotted the tiny arachnid, about a centimetre long and dull grey-brown, on his office book in the Chapel of our Lady of Martyrdom in Canterbury Cathedral. A few weeks later, a

small tick colony was found in a window that was being restored, and four live specimens were sent to Dr Paul Hillyard in the Natural History Museum in London. He expects to have them for some time.

Ticks are "incredible survivors", he says – they go for years without a meal. Though pigeons' blood is their food of choice, they will latch onto humans if they are hungry. "I'm not going to kill them," said Dr Hillyard, "but they will eventually end up in a tube, in alcohol. I'm certainly not going to offer them my arm." *Ted Harrison in the Church Times*, 14 May 1999.

MITSUBISHI HEAVY INDUSTRIES

SONY

Strange Deaths



A COMPENDIUM OF MACABRE DEPARTURES FROM THIS EARTH

A MAN BLEED to death in New Delhi after his wife stabbed him for demanding a second cup of tea which she was not ready to serve. [AFP] 17 Feb 1999.

FRANCIS BUHAGIAR, 68, didn't like the breakfast his 76-year-old sister Maria gave him one morning last February – so he shot her dead, a court in Malta heard. The row is believed to have been over burnt toast. [R] 3 Mar 1999.

PAOLO FASANO, 71, from Alessandria in northern Italy, killed his 74-year-old wife Piera for having the television volume turned up too loud as she watched a music festival. He hit her with the iron from the ironing board and then strangled her with a tie from the wardrobe. "Then I didn't know what to do," he said, "so I sat down next to her in front of the television. But I lowered the volume." *D.Telegraph*, 2 Mar 1999.

ON 11 AUGUST 1994, passers-by in the Los Angeles suburb of

Northridge found a man unconscious in the driver's seat of a blue Volkswagen convertible. The car had crashed, shearing off a fire hydrant, and water was cascading through the open car-roof and onto the man's face. Attempts at cardiopulmonary resuscitation failed and the man was pronounced dead at the scene. Police suspected that he had drowned. The water level never rose above the man's head, but investigators suspect that because he was sitting face up, he was unable to breathe through the strong stream of water. There were apparently no witnesses to the accident itself. *Los Angeles Daily News*, via *Meriden(CT) Record-Journal*, 13 Aug 1994.

THAI SNAKE CHARMER Heiy Kerdchucherd (or Hie Kerdchoochuay), 55, died when a python he had captured from a neighbour's house coiled itself around his neck and strangled him. He was found dead at his home in Uttaradit province, 260 miles

(420km) north of Bangkok. *Hong Kong Standard*, *Metro (London)*, 5 May 1999.

A BOY WAS fishing with his father on a lake in central Tolima province, Colombia, on 22 May was pulled into the water by an Anaconda and crushed to death in its embrace. *Toronto Star*, 25 May 1999.

HARRY COGRAM, 84, a veteran of the Normandy invasion, who lived in sheltered accommodation in Peckham, south London, hanged himself after his council threatened him with eviction over rent arrears of threepence. The coroner, recording a verdict of suicide, added that Mr Cogram "did indeed give his all for us." *D.Telegraph*, 25 Feb 1999.

ANDREW BLYTH, A 12-year-old boy scout from Berkshire, hanged himself on 28 May with a rope he had been given to practise tying knots. After his pet mouse had died, he told a friend that his life was not worth living. *D.Telegraph*, 18 June 1999.

A 43-YEAR-OLD UKRAINIAN man was electrocuted when he used a live electric cable connected to the mains in his house to kill fish in the river Tereblya. When the dead fish appeared on the water surface, he went to collect his take before turning off the power. According to the *Fakty* newspaper, he had intended to cook the fish for a meal to mark the first anniversary of his mother-in-law's death. [DPA] 27 May 1999.

ON 8 APRIL a mother and her three children were picking white wood anemones in the forest of Simlångsdalen east of Halmstad, Sweden. As they returned home at about 6pm, one of the children, a seven-year-old girl, ran up a hill to pick a few more flowers.

At that moment, a boulder weighing about a ton deposited more than 10,000 years ago during the last Ice Age, came loose and rolled down the slope, crushing the girl to death. *Expressen*, *Sydsvenskan (Sweden)*, 9 April 1999.

Mythconceptions 14

THE FINGER IN THE DYKE

THE MYTH

In the town of Alkmaar, in Holland, there is a museum devoted to the memory of Hans Brinker, the boy who put his finger in a hole in a dyke, thus preventing a devastating flood. What a hero! What a finger!

THE "TRUTH"

Despite the museum, popular with tourists, and a memorial statue to the Little Dutch Boy in the village of Spaarndam west of Amsterdam, it seems that this story is little-known in Holland itself. In 1865 (or 1873) Mary Mapes (or Mapers) Dodge (or Dodges) published in the USA her children's novel *Hans Brinker or The Silver Skates*, and it appears to be from this best-seller that the legend arose. Could it be that this story is so widespread in English-speaking countries simply because it affords such rich opportunities in our tongue for vulgar punning?

SOURCES: Readers' letters, including one from an official of the Nederlands Centrum voor Volkscultuur, in the *Daily Mail* (7+22 Sept 1998).



MYTHCHASER Speaking of great water-related structures, is it true that it was George Formby's father, also called George Formby, who invented Wigan's celebrated but non-existent pier, later made famous down south by George Orwell – and if so, when and why?

Common sense suggests that it would take rather more than a single juvenile digit to plug a broken dyke, but it's not clear whether the Little Hans tale created a folk myth, or reflected one. If you can fill a gap in our knowledge, then don't hang about – get your finger out, and write to *FT*.

BY HUNT EMERSON & MAT COWARD



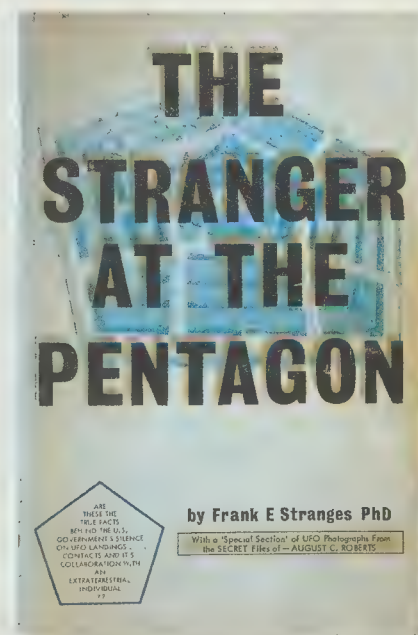
BOTH ILLUSTRATIONS: HUNT EMERSON

PAGES 40-44

stranger than

FICTION

The burgeoning UFO community of the 1950s and 1960s was peopled by some truly larger-than-life characters. Here, **Colin Bennett** opens the pages of one of the weirdest books ever written and reveals the bizarre world of writer and evangelist Frank Stranges...



**"MANY WITNESSED
THE LONG, WHITE
CLOVEN TONGUES"**

Self-published books found at the bottom of damp cardboard boxes outside book shops often have a strange kamikaze quality about them. One such discovery is *Stranger at the Pentagon* by Frank Stranges, first published in 1966 (left) and republished in 1991. It tells the story of Valiant Thor, a 'Christian' missionary from a superior race who lives on Venus, whom Stranges first met during a visit to the Pentagon in the late 1950s. Thor has visited planet Earth regularly since the birth of Mankind. According to him, these missions were always somewhat fortuitous – for example, his space ship arrived just in time to witness the American Civil War and also the mushroom-cloud over Hiroshima.

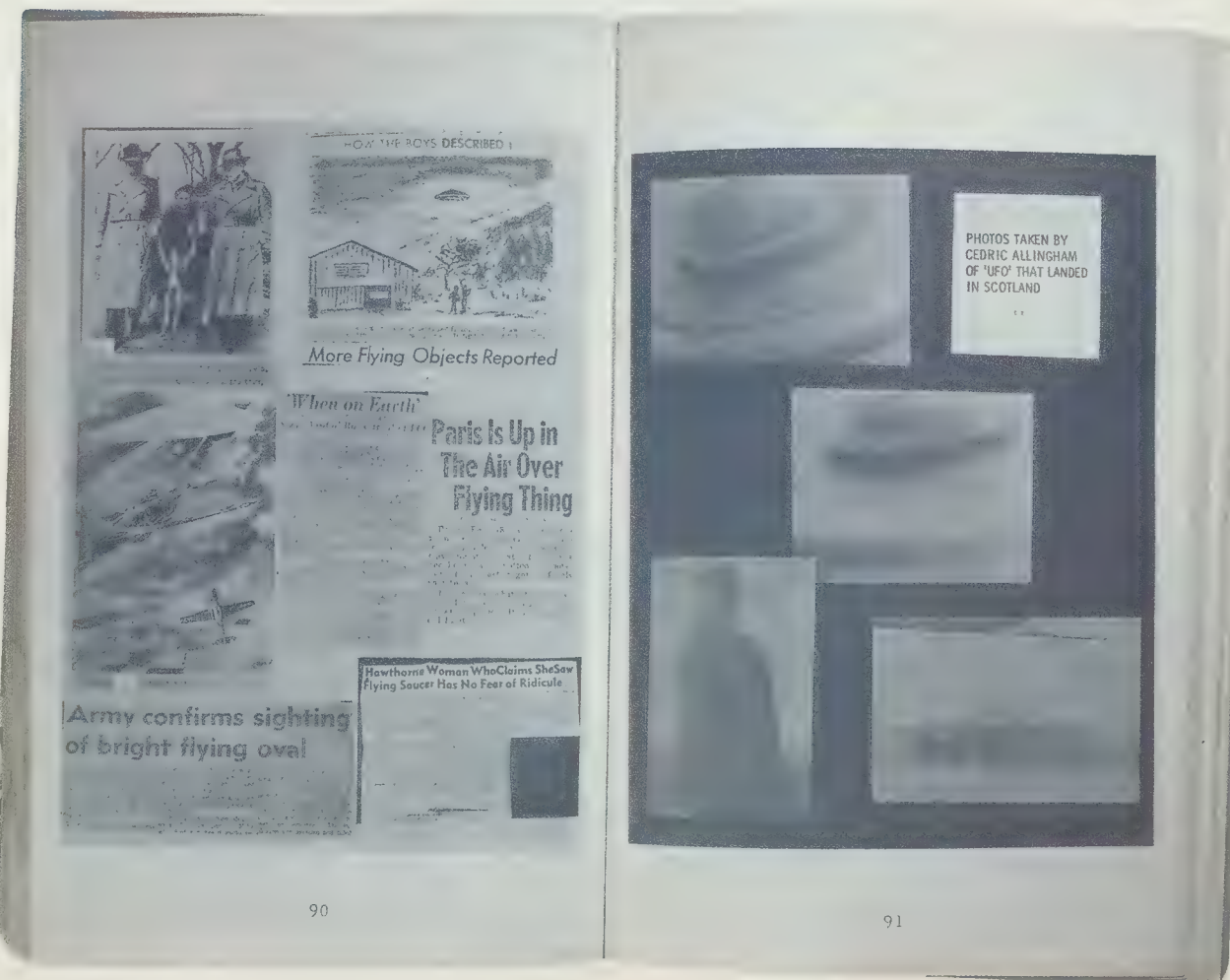
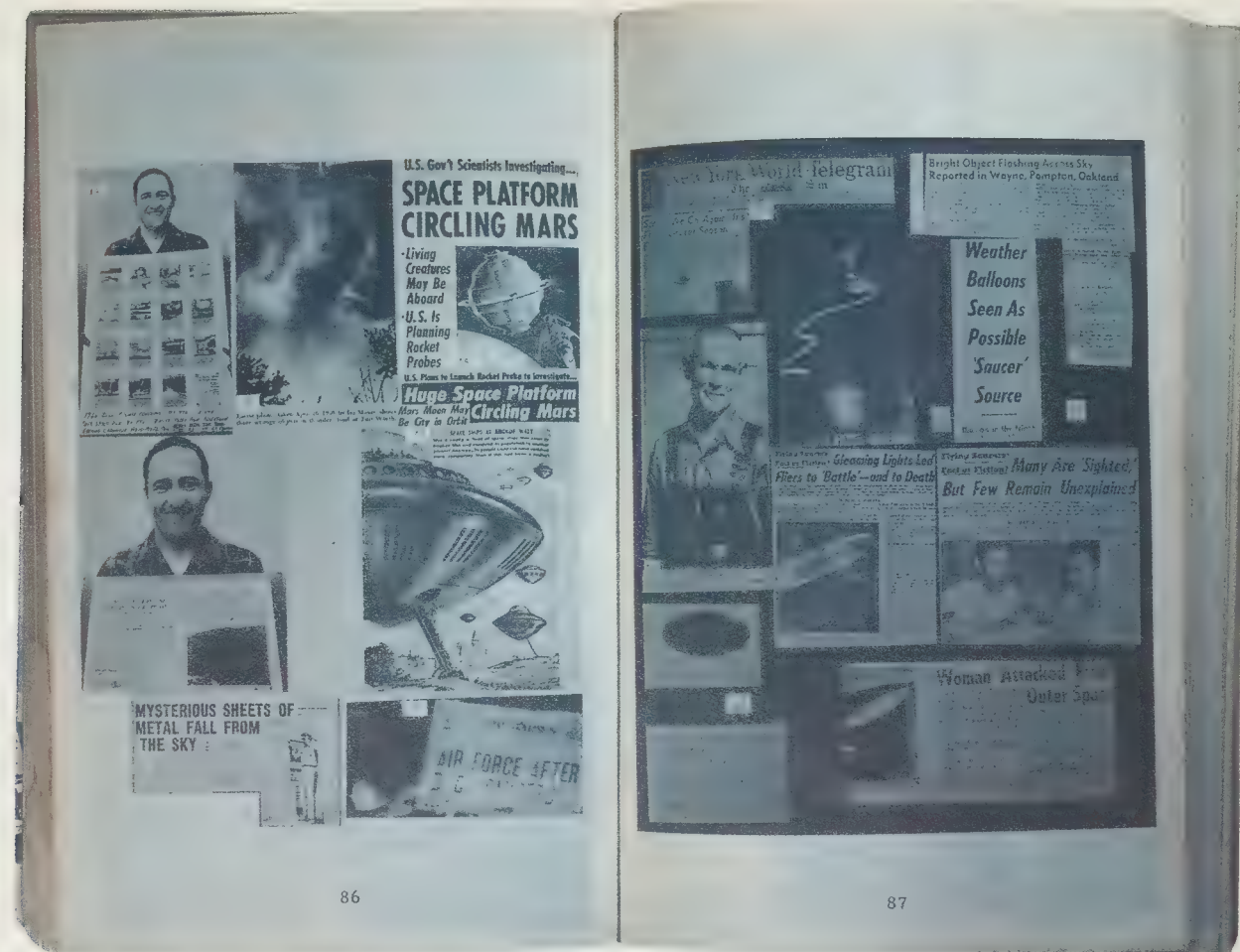
Valiant's crew are pure Buck Rogers types; we don't know whether they wore their underpants over their tights, but their ranks and their equipment have wonderful early *Star Trek* names. The '1st Magnetic Control Officer' says on one such occasion: "Val, they've gone from the caves and have built huts of hardened mud, leaves and branches." There is a 'Scan Control Officer' who manages the "televue", and something called a TAXT machine which tries to translate the thankfully "defiant" gibberish of the early hominids, who, it is nice to report, were unimpressed by Valiant and pelted his craft with stones. The story continues with Valiant meeting the President. In 1960, this was of course Dwight Eisenhower.

Frank Stranges was a gung-ho Christian writer and UFO evangelist of that time, and a dead-ringer for Charles Fort. Like Fort, he lived in Brooklyn, but there all resemblance ends. Wearing one of his many hats, Frank wrote *Flying Saucers Unlimited*, and *Flying Saucerama*, whose chapter 6 warns against 'Fakes, Frauds, Forgeries, and Foolishness' with a straight face.

He even made a 45 rpm EP record about flying saucers – a valuable damp-box find for someone – and a documentary film *Phenomena 7.7*, in the late 1960s.

Stranges was a staunch member of the Marshals of America, and directly equated the Christian evangelical cause with his UFO interest. A photograph in *Stranger At The Pentagon*, from February 1966, shows Stranges seated by the Rev Franklin Hall, who is "ministering the unidentified heavenly object" to a rapt convention in the Blarney (sic) Auditorium in Los Angeles. The photo is captioned (with original spelling): "Many witnessed the beautiful, long, white cloven tongues like fire descend 'upon' truth loving folk during the convention, like (Acts 2:3) phenomenon." One would expect nothing less from a man who was not only a 'Doctor of Humanities', but a Grand Evangelist of the Sovereign (sic) Order of Alfred the Great.

SOME OF FRANK STRANGES' PHOTO AND CUTTING COLLAGES FROM STRANGER IN THE PENTAGON (1966). BOOK PHOTOS: ALEX HOWE



Through *Stranger At The Pentagon*, "manufactured in the United States (sic) of America", Stranges offers training courses for would-be UFO investigators, who could earn "up to \$500". He offers for sale audio-tapes containing "awesome matter". Tape number 6 gives the seven vital steps to be taken in order to become an "interplanetary traveller", but we must realise the grave danger involved in leaving our body "unattended".

Tape number 2 answers the fascinating question of how, since the Earth is patently hollow (but nevertheless contains a "paradise"), Noah's Flood did not flow inside it. The witchcraft tape (no. 8) is "not recommended for people with weak hearts," but if we take the risk, we'll learn of Stranges' "personal encounter with Demons", which in 1966 might have been useful to him as a member of the Los Angeles Association for Social Psychology.

The contents of tapes 3 and 4 have to be quoted in full:

"3. The Day 'You' Will Vanish From This Planet. This great event is about to take place momentarily. Millions will be listed as 'Missing'. Children will disappear. Graves opened. Mass evacuation... under Divine Control."

"4. The Mystery-Man of Darkness Whose Number is 666. WHO is this individual to whom the USSR is secretly pledged? How is he able to call fire down from the heavens? What is his name? Where does he live? When will he rule over America???"

After that, sceptics might doubt Frank's claim that "through his research, and visitations to actual sites of purported UFO landings, he has been in a position to properly evaluate all such reports."

Just as we are reeling from the adventures of Valiant Thor, Frank rushes in with his very own pasted collage of newspaper clippings and photos. Working more like a crazy sculptor than a writer, he constructs a 'Jurassic Museum' [see *FT* 100:22-24] of the UFO, juxtaposing fractured slices of the 1960s. These confrontations include possibly the clearest UFO sighting ever, shot by the Radio Officer on board the British ship *SS Ramsey*, and an equally clear shot of the very weird rooms of Albert K Bender. (Bender is probably the inventor of the ufological Men in Black as his

THEY PELTED THOR'S CRAFT WITH STONES

story inspired Gray Barker to write the seminal book *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers*. Bender's room is plastered with images of cats, skeletons, skulls, bits and pieces of unidentifiable apparatus, and contains much 1960s photoflash equipment. It is a room from which every American assassin might have risen, trailing wires and vapour.

In these scrapbook pages, we meet George Tassel of the Giant Rock conventions [see *FT* 118:28-31] and Daniel Fry, UFO photographer. Other investigators of the deep past pose

with his home-built "full-size" flying saucer with a youthful (but still worried-looking) Amazing Randi at his side (if only their dialogue could have been recorded!).

Then come three rare prints of 'airships' from 1895/6, followed by pictures and text from long-forgotten abductees and illegible newspaper texts about the Maury Island UFO mystery... and just when we can stand no more, we see press-cuttings about the loss of the Thresher submarine, the death of Captain Mantell (while chasing a UFO in his plane), falls of angel hair and sheets of strange metal. There is also a photograph of the "premier" [sic] of Frank's film, *Phenomena 7-7*, which looks like a clubroom after a bad-weather golf-meet, just before the caretaker switches out the lights.

These are useful archives because, in most cases, much of the text attached to this antique ephemera may be read using a powerful lamp and a magnifier. Broken letter-press fonts of old America loom at us as we read of contactee Howard Menger's police-bust for what we now would call electronic pollution. (Howard was not a good fellow to live next to if good TV reception was required). Facsimiles of appreciative letters from radio stations - with a PS thanking Frank for the candy - are presented as proudly as a boy scout will show his thank-you letters for collecting empty milk bottles.

There are some fascinating pickings for connoisseurs. The Chicago periodical *America* (8 September 1966) interviews Stranges, who mentions that he hopes that Representative Gerald Ford, a Republican from Michigan, manages to obtain a Congressional hearing on the UFO phenomenon. (We now know Ford was President of the United States of America after Nixon resigned, and never did get his Congressional hearings.)

Frank himself appears in many photos looking as if he is a judge in a Latin American Dance Championship in some small American town. Stranges' lovely wife, Bernice, with her long blond hair piled high above her head, is surrounded by middle-aged, shirt-sleeved local worthies, their beers placed on the upright piano which, it seems, was an essential prop for Stranges' trestle-table presentations, dinners, and meetings.

Many of the newspaper clippings are in the same hot-metal setting which carried the speeches of both Washington and Lincoln, and we see

the 'end-stopped' sentences of the provincial American reportage of the period, as the wobble and lurch of hurried punctuation tries to grasp the mind-boggling events of 1960s UFO sightings. These were the last historical hours of this old apparatus, and its final, animated dance tells us much about the way media evolves into new species of technology.

If this is the worst book in the world, Stranges nevertheless fights his way into authentic significance. He shows, in his peculiar way, that as an early consumer object, the Flying Saucer was perfect: the Adamski version in particular looked like something which just had to be bought. It was round, shiny, and looked like a piece off a dream-Cadillac, simply dripping with chrome. It had a wonderful message for all time: that, to the horror of the dull soul, the world refuses to be disenchanted, that sea-serpents simply refuse to be banished off the maps.

This child's junk book approach is absolutely irresistible. The photo-montage races back and forth from the 1950s to the 1960s, with much of the material now probably lost. The text looks as if it was one-finger tapped on a Remington typewriter. In those days, typesetting was very expensive - a somewhat specialised mystery - and done on linotype machines as big as kitchens.

In the 1960s, and for some time afterwards, there was just yourself, a pair of scissors, a pot of paste, your study table and, if you could afford it, a local friendly litho printer who advised on the complicated bits if you bought him a drink or two. But Frank has no modern editorial qualms about taking printed copy and shrinking down to his selected A5 (or thereabouts) format, or using a font-size which has gone right off the table. On several occasions, there are even reproduced reversed-out blueprint shots, from early dye-line machines. This is last of the great backwoods books, before horse-time became locomotive-time and things were never to be the same in ufoland.

Hacking our way through a jungle of baffling non sequiturs, we re-enter the years after the death of Jack Kennedy and just before the death of Bobby, with Elvis Presley and Woody Herman only a few kilocycles apart on the first-generation transistor perched on the new Frigidaire, and perhaps a headline about the first worrying rise in US casualties in Vietnam. A typical section of the progress travels from the disgustingly handsome Captain Ruppelt (=Angel, who had the strangest eyes seen on any man born), to the ugly features of the arch-intriguer Dr Condon (=Devil, who looks like a muscular Himmeler), to Gray Barker (the original publisher of Menger's books), in a B-feature transparent helmet, with what look like ice-cream cones stuck on it. Against this we see the smiling Frank - and again Bernice, in her dinner-gown - speaking to middle America rampant, at evangelical meetings... with not a black face in sight.

Whoever did the paste-up was not fussy about the niceties of cropping. A tantalising cliff-hanger comes on page 87 (pictured here at the top of page 29), where an 18in (46cm) long fairy-like creature - which looks astonishingly like the "27-inch [68cm] little man" captured near Mexico city in "early 1950" on page 90 - is seen being examined by



FRANK E STRANGES

Born on 6 October 1927, Frank's interest in UFOs began when a college roommate said he had seen them while flying over the Pacific. Frank claimed to have had sightings of his own - in Florida, Mexico, Finland and Los Angeles - since 1956.

He collected many qualifications from American Bible colleges, including the title of 'doctor of metaphysics' from the Society of St Luke the Physician in London and doctorates in theology (1961), psychology (1963), philosophy (1964) and humanities (1966). He authored many books about evangelism, morals, and social ethics - and, following a PhD from the National Institute of Criminology, Washington - wrote one on *Death by Strangulation*.

Stranges claimed to have worked undercover for various secret service agencies between 1949 and 1970. He was on the boards of several universities and humanitarian and art institutions. He founded the National Investigations Committee on UFOs (NICUFO) in 1969.

Stranges continues to preach his UFO-related evangelism and sell plans to Val Thor's spaceship, currently parked below Lake Mead, near Las Vegas. A review of a lecture by Stranges from 1995 can be found at www.ufomind.com/misc/1997/d02-001.html.

IT'S A MINOR MASTERPIECE OF FOUND ART

Anatomy Professor W A Mickle of Emory University. This incident, if verified, would make the Roswell alien pale by comparison. The trouble is the litho screen has been placed over the paste-up of the cropped article and the whole has been stuck on to a black background! The text (which can just be read with our magnifier) ends: "...said it resembled..." We don't, therefore, know what it resembled, but it is claimed that the creature was knocked down by a truck, and taken to Professor Mickle by the driver. In Frank Stranges' wonderland one does not ask where this little fellow is now.

We have to remember that *Stranger At The Pentagon* was put together during the great creative period of Andy Warhol, and Stranges' montage is unconsciously as good as anything of Warhol's. It is a minor masterpiece of 'found' art, like the simulacra that readers send to *FT*. The Frank Stranges of this world remind us, with telling force, that most of us have a very narrow view of works of art. They are above that mundane art of the grocer called human commonsense, and that equally black art of the middle-class called rationalism. Finally, like Carlos Castaneda and Whitley Streiber, such authors are crucified on one count: they refuse all and any fictional convention or framework.

The glory of the human race is that it defies Darwin. If the battle with Nature were for the survival of the fittest, then such perfect mayfly brains as Frank Stranges would have been bred out aeons ago. Given their intense subjectivities, the slightest genetic flicker would have the Stranges of this world as Wagners or Miltons. But one doubts if such sleepwalking folk as Frank Stranges are ever fully awake; they are fixed in a kind of chattering sub-text of dreams which proliferate to infinity, like green blooming pond-algae of the mind.

By the time the 'Epilog' is reached, any reader with a rebel soul is disappointed that they don't

make ufologists like Frank like any more. Fifteen years after the publication of *The Stranger at the Pentagon*, he appears in a photograph in the 1980 edition of Margaret Sachs' *UFO Encyclopedia*. Lighting, lenses, and film have changed, and the fat has gone from his face. The dinner-jacket and trestle-table dinners have vanished, and the lovely Bernice is gone from his side.

A new cycle has begun. Frank looks lost and a little in shock. He sucked deep on the wild, mad, air of the 1960s, and perhaps the world got to him and told him to write proper books about 'proper' UFOs. Or perhaps one day he woke to find his wild talent was gone from him. But he looks younger than his age (below) and, at a pinch, his drained face could just be that of Valiant Thor, who, all those years ago, sat on a park bench in New Jersey and told his space adventures to two lovely girls, one of whom looked like Bernice.

But the stamp of demoniac sulphur is still there in the brow. Just like Mr Toad, and Alice - and indeed like George Adamski who came back from the dead - Frank Stranges will no doubt escape yet again to wreak havoc with the picture of the world as we would like it to be. His fevered look tells us that in this sorcerer, vital centres have survived the nuclear hits of doubt, loss, ridicule, and the failure of prophecy, and are, even now, hard at work minting new metaphors beyond the grave.

The way things are going in ufoland, Stranges might well have the last laugh. **FT**



MAN IN BLACK: A rare photo of Albert K Bender in his famous room.

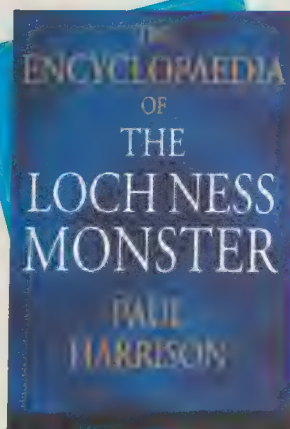
amidst news clippings with their valve-amplifiers, reel-to-reel tape recorders, quarter-inch tape-to-vinyl machines, Bell hand-held motion cameras, and huge photo-flash reflectors. Here too is a baffled-looking Kenneth Arnold - whose July 1947 sighting launched the term 'flying saucers' - sitting on a settee, scratching his head amidst photographs of weird long-forgotten prototypes.

Next is Buck Nelson, who made a day trip to Mars, with his massive Spock-like ears. Then comes Andy Sinatra (yes, that's his name), and 'Agent Sal' (with twinkling bands round their heads and batteries in their hands, no less). Otis T Carr - also known as the "mystic barber who returned from the Moon" - poses



THEY CAME FROM OUTER SPACE: (left to right) Andy Sinatra and Frank Stranges; Venusian Commander Valiant Thor (far right of photo); author Gray Barker.

FortwareFortwear



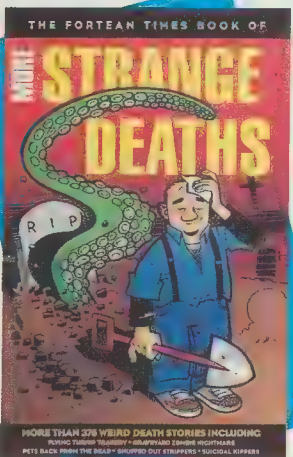
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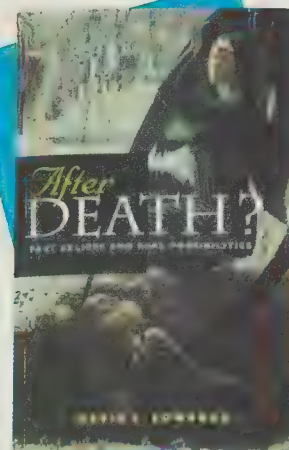
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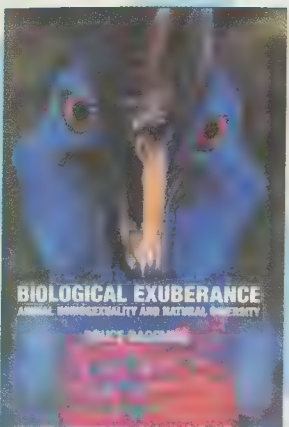
THE KINGDOM

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Something strange is happening at the brand-new hospital called The Kingdom. Driverless ambulances arrive, ghostly wails emanate from the lift shaft and Dr Mogge is loose in the morgue with a hacksaw. Could it be something to do with The Kingdom being built over the gates to the spirit world? Acclaimed director Lars Von Trier's five-part surrealist horror drama crosses *Twin Peaks* with *Casualty*, and remains surprisingly chilling.



AFTER DEATH

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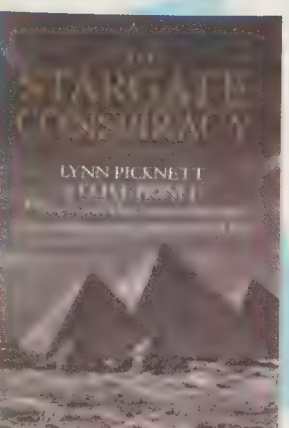
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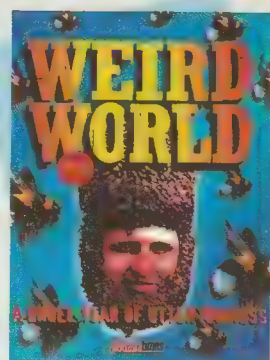
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FT STUDIES from pg 20

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plan nine from outer

SPACE

One New Age channelling cult, above all the rest, has had a huge – and very disturbing – influence on hundreds of thousands of devotees worldwide. Known as 'The Nine', its disciples include cutting-edge scientists, multi-millionaire industrialists and leading politicians. This exclusive extract based on *The Stargate Conspiracy* by **Lynn Picknett** and **Clive Prince** looks at the sinister origins of The Nine.

The declaration on the left is typical of the channelled pronouncements of the Council of Nine – or just 'The Nine'. They contain all the usual New Age ingredients of grandiose statements, shaky grammar and unprovable predictions. But unlike all the other channelling cults, that of The Nine has serious clout. Perhaps the reason for this is that they claim to be the Ennead, or the nine major gods of ancient Egypt (see panel). Or could there be

another reason, one that owes more to *The X-Files* than the Pyramid Texts?

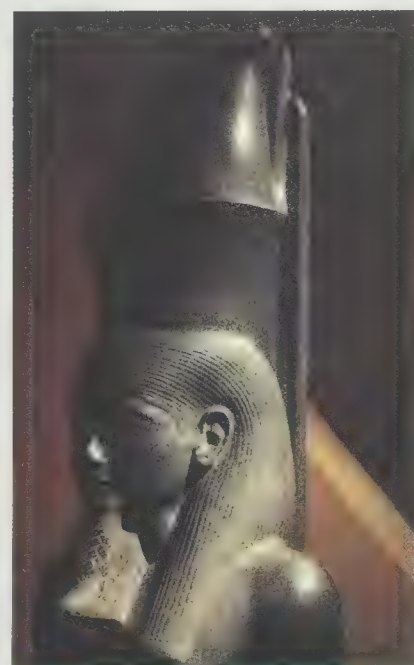
Although The Nine may appear to be quintessentially a modern phenomenon, our research uncovered its truly astonishing pedigree. In fact, the story begins nearly 50 years ago, in a private research laboratory in Glen Cove, Maine, called the Round Table Foundation, run by a medical doctor named Andrija Puharich (also known as Henry K Puharich).² Set up in 1948 to research the paranormal, among the noted psychics studied at the Foundation were the famous Irish medium Eileen Garrett and the Dutch clairvoyant Peter Hurkos (Pieter van de Hirk). Prominent members included the influential philosopher and inventor Arthur M Young and the socialite Alice Bouverie (née Astor).

In December 1952, Puharich brought into his laboratory an Indian mystic named Dr D G Vinod, who began to channel The Nine or 'the Nine Principles'. In the months before Vinod returned to India, a group met regularly to hear The Nine's channelled wisdom. Never known for their modesty, The Nine proclaimed themselves to be God, stating "God is nobody else than we together, the Nine Principles of God."

Three years later, there appeared to be independent confirmation of their existence. In Mexico, Puharich and Young met Charles and Lillian Laughead, former Christian missionaries who were by then prominent in the burgeoning UFO contactee movement. (For a description of their involvement in the Dorothy Martin circle, see Jerome Clark's 'When Prophecy Failed' in FT117.) Back in the States a few weeks later, Puharich received a letter from the Laugheads containing messages received by their group's channeller. This message also claimed to come from the Nine Principles, even – amazingly – including references to the earlier communications transmitted through Dr Vinod. Could The Nine possibly be for real?

Perhaps the answer is embedded in the career of Puharich himself. After disbanding the Round Table Foundation in 1958, he worked for 10 years as an inventor of medical devices and achieved international recognition as a parapsychologist, most famously studying the Brazilian psychic surgeon, Arigo (José Pedro de Freitas). But all that was to pale into insignificance because, in 1971, Puharich discovered Uri Geller.

At their first meetings in Tel Aviv in 1971, Puharich hypnotised Geller in an attempt to find out where his abilities came from. As a result, the young Israeli started to channel 'Spectra' – an entity which claimed to be a con-



ATLM (ANCIENT EGYPT PICTURE LIBRARY)

*I am the beginning. I am the end. I am the emissary. But the original time that I was on the Planet Earth was 34,000 of your years ago. I am the balance. And when I say 'I' – I mean because I am an emissary for The Nine. It is not I, but it is the group... We are nine principles of the Universe, yet together we are one.*¹



PHOTOGRAPH BY J. J. HARRIS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE. THE PYRAMIDS: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

SPECTRA CLAIMED TO BE A CONSCIOUS SUPERCOMPUTER

'Bobby Horne' – who lived to regret his dealings with The Nine. Driven to the brink of suicide by their constant demands, he too dropped out of the scene – his despair being dismissed by Whitmore as "signs of instability".⁴ After this, Phyllis Schlemmer was appointed the authorised spokesperson for the entity – known simply as 'Tom' – who represented The Nine.

Puharich, Whitmore and Schlemmer then set up Lab Nine at Puharich's estate in Ossining, New York. The Nine's disciples included multi-millionaire businessmen (many hiding behind pseudonyms and including members of Canada's richest family, the Bronfmans), European nobility, scientists from the Stamford Research Institute and at least one prominent political figure who was a personal friend of President Gerald Ford.

We also know that Lyall Watson (then the darling of the alternative scene because of his seminal 1973 book *Supernature*) was involved, as was the influential counter-culture guru Ira Einhorn – and Gene Roddenberry, creator of *Star Trek*.

Roddenberry was part of that circle in 1974 and 1975, and even produced the screenplay for a movie about The Nine. How much he was influenced by them is unknown, although it is said that some of their concepts found their way into the early *Star Trek* movies, and *The Next Generation* and *Deep Space Nine* (what a giveaway!) series. (There is a character named 'Vinod' in one *Deep Space Nine* episode.)

Another key player in Lab Nine was Dr James J Hurtak, who was appointed Puharich's second-in-command by The Nine. In fact, Hurtak had been independently channelling The Nine since 1973.⁵

Puharich and Whitmore commissioned British writer Stuart Holroyd to write an account of their adventures, which appeared in 1977 as *Prelude to the Landing on Planet Earth* (retitled *Briefings for the Landing on Planet Earth* in paperback).

In this extraordinary book the true identity of the Nine – and of Tom – was finally revealed. Far from being the chummy character that his rather avuncular name suggests, Tom is actually Atum, the creator-god of the ancient Egyptian religion of Heliopolis, and Uncle Tom with his eight mates are none other than the Great Ennead of Heliopolis (see panel).

scious super-computer aboard a spaceship. However, Puharich suggested to him that there might be a connection with the Nine Principles, and Spectra readily agreed that there was. The Nine claimed that they had programmed Geller with his powers as a young child.

Through Geller, The Nine alerted Puharich to his life's mission, which was to use Geller's talents to alert the world to an imminent mass landing of spaceships that would bring representatives of The Nine. However, Geller – by now an international psychic superstar – bowed out in 1973 and has resolutely turned his back on The Nine ever since.³ Puharich had to find other channels.

He joined up with aristocratic former racing driver Sir John Whitmore and Florida-based psychic and healer Phyllis Schlemmer. They found a new channeller – a Daytona cook known to history only by the pseudonym



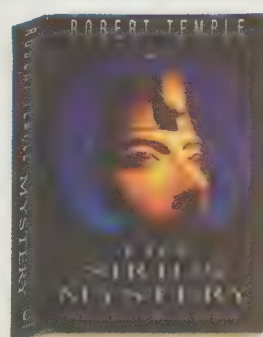
ANYONE CAN MAKE A MISTAKE

Far from being the omniscient gods thousands believe them to be, The Nine often make downright howlers. Their followers are keen to pass on the revelation that the ancient Egyptian name for the Sphinx of Giza is *arq ur*. If the Nine say so, it must be true.

The problem is that, while this interpretation appears in Robert Temple's *The Sirius Mystery* (1976), it is, in fact, a mistake. Temple misread Sir E A Wallis Budge's *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary* – although the entry for *arq ur* reads "Sphinx, 2, 8", this is not

the Sphinx but a reference to a French journal called *Sphinx*, and the numbers simply give the volume and page. This is the source for Budge's definition of *arq ur*, which actually means 'silver'.

So did the Nine make the same mistake as Temple?



WHO WERE THE ENNEAD?



If The Nine really are the ancient Egyptian gods known as the Ennead, as claimed, then their origins go back a long way indeed... to the beginning of the world, according to the Egyptians themselves. There were several systems of Egyptian religious myth, but the tale of the Ennead arose at the Delta-city of On, better known by its Greek name of Heliopolis, the City of the Sun. The story

appeared very early on, before the Third Dynasty of Pharaohs, which is usually said to have begun in the 28th century BC, and it's essentially a cosmogony, a narrative of how the world came to be.

In the beginning there was only an immense ocean of chaos called Nun which contained both potential life and a principle of consciousness – the god Atum, whose name means 'the Whole' or 'the

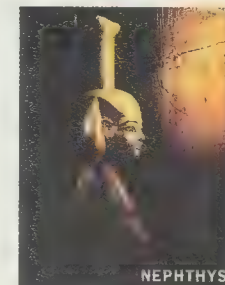


Complete'. Atum somehow fertilised himself unaided and gave birth to the first divine couple, Shu and Tefnut. Shu was the empty air, while his wife Tefnut represented the moisture of the atmosphere.

Shu and Tefnut, in turn, gave birth to Geb, the earth-god, and Nut, the sky-goddess. Then Shu came between Geb and

Nut and raised the sky-goddess high above the earth. Nonetheless, Geb and Nut produced two further pairs of male-female twins, Osiris and Isis, and Set and Nephthys, a set of four deities who originally appear to have been concerned with the fertility (or otherwise) of the land of Egypt. In this way the world came to be, and the nine deities responsible became known as the Ennead, or Psedjet.

In later times, the



story spread to other cities and was integrated into the local cults, usually by identifying members of the Ennead with the most popular deities of the area. In particular, Atum was identified with Ra, the sun-god, and Horus-of-the-horizon... the latter being an important deity in another well-known 'channelled' book, Aleister Crowley's *Book of the Law*.

RECOMMENDED READING
Larousse World Mythology (1965)

But even with such impressive contacts, all was not well with Puharich. Lab Nine broke up in 1978 after a series of mysterious events that culminated in an arson attack on the Ossining estate, and he fled to Mexico, claiming that he was being persecuted by the CIA. He returned to the USA two years later, and appears to have played no further part in The Nine story. He died in 1995 after falling down the stairs in his South Carolina home.

However, The Nine continued. Not only did Schlemmer and Whitmore continue their mission, but Dr Hurtak has also moved on. He has become a major player in the unfolding millennial drama currently being played out at Giza, but perhaps more importantly he has established himself as a New Age guru *par excellence*, travelling the world giving workshops on his book of channelled revelations from The Nine, *The Keys of Enoch*.

GURU: Mysterious Andrija Puharich.

Written and laid out in classic Biblical style, its darkly apocalyptic vision has huge numbers of influential devotees. This we find very worrying.

Another Nine channel – an Englishwoman named Jenny O'Connor – was introduced to the avant garde Esalen Institute in San Francisco by Sir John Whitmore. She and The Nine became so influential there that they held seminars and – unbelievably – were actually listed on the Institute's staff, even successfully ordering the sacking of its chief finance officer and the reorganisation of its entire management structure.⁶

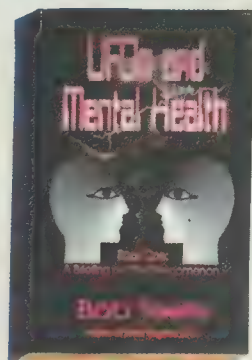
This should concern us, because many influential people attended The Nine's Esalen seminars, including Russians who were part of the Institute's Soviet Exchange programme. Some of these later rose to prominence in the Gorbachev regime and were instrumental in the downfall of Communism. (The Esalen Institute now runs the US branch of the Gorbachev Foundation.)



THE NINE'S OTHER VOICES

Insider comments on The Nine.

DICK FARLEY



Farley is an American researcher who has researched the influence of The Nine from an informed position. Between 1991 and 1994, he was Director of Program Development for the Human Potential Foundation, set up by a US Senator to explore psychic phenomena and extraterrestrial contact among other topics. He has had close ties with individuals connected with The Nine.

Farley voiced his concern about the growing influence of The Nine on the movers and shakers of American society, writing: "They maintain a working network of physicists and psychics, intelligence operatives and powerful billionaires, who are less concerned about their 'source' and its weirdness than they are about having every advantage and new data edge in what they believe is a battle for Earth itself."

Source: Dick Farley, 'The Council of Nine: Perspective on Briefings from Deep Space' on the BrotherBlue website: www.brotherblue.org

JACK SARFATTI



Sarfatti, an avant-garde physicist who worked for the Esalen Institute in the late 1970s, knew many of the key players at Lab Nine, including Puharich. In autobiographical writings on the web, Sarfatti refers to the intelligence connections of Puharich and others involved in the Nine scene, including their



PHOTOGRAPHY: ALEX HOWE. BACKGROUND: ALEXANDER TOMLINSON. IMAGE MANIPULATION: ETIENNE GUILFAN

The Nine are very much still with us. One of their recent channels, who is also in contact with Tom, is the American writer David M Myers. He is co-author with Britain's David S Percy of that extraordinary tome *Two-Thirds*, a history of the galaxy and the human race according to Myer's otherworldly contacts (who clearly have no sense of the absurd). Percy – best known as a champion of the 'Face on Mars' and the 'hoaxing' of the Apollo moon landings – was at one time part of the Schlemmer circle.⁷

Among the other major proponents of the 'monuments' of Mars and their alleged connection with ancient Egypt is none other than Dr James Hurtak – The Nine's great prophet – who has promoted this idea since as long ago as 1973. Richard C Hoagland – familiar to FT readers as another unrepentant 'Mars Face' enthusiast – is also clearly under The Nine's spell. David Myers and David Percy were, respectively, American and European Director of Operations for Hoagland's Mars Mission. In fact, his interpretation of the 'monuments' of Mars comes directly from The Nine. Flake though he may appear (increasingly in these hallowed pages), but his influence over huge swathes of the hungrier mystery seekers is undeniable. This is the man who

addresses rapt audiences at the United Nations.

But it is in the New Age channelling circuit that The Nine have truly come into their own. In any other circles their true agenda would no doubt have been rumoured long ago, but this is the New Age. Anything The Nine say must be sweetness and light, right? But an objective reading of their divine pronouncements reveal the first stirrings of something very nasty in Paradise.

Their words appeared in 1992 as the book *The Only Planet of Choice*, credited to 'transceiver' Schlemmer and edited by Mary Bennett (a one-time member of the Schlemmer circle who also edited Myers and Percy's *Two-Thirds*). This has had an unprecedented influence over the New Age. According to Palden Jenkins (editor of an earlier edition of *Only Planet*) more and more New Age channelling groups are 'realising' that the real source of their wisdom is The Nine.⁸ In fact, we have discerned what amounts to a campaign

by The Nine – or their adherents – to 'take over' the New Age. It would be a mistake to underestimate the economic or even political potential of this vast subculture – rich pickings indeed.

But The Nine's influence does not extend merely to New Age channelling circles. Andrija Puharich, James Hurtak and Richard Hoagland have all lectured at the United Nations in New York. And individuals connected with The Nine are also known to have influence



NOT JUST ALL IN THE MIND...

The extent of the US military and intelligence agencies' mind control experiments became a major scandal in the 1970s.

'Mind control' covers everything from psychological techniques to enhance front-line motivation, and truth drugs to outright brainwashing. Most notorious were those carried out by the CIA. These began in 1950 with the codename BLUEBIRD, renamed ARTICHOKE and, most infamously, in 1953,



MKULTRA. The US Navy and Army had their own research programmes, respectively projects CHATTER and OFTEN. Both collaborated with the CIA's MKULTRA team.¹²

The Army and CIA teams were, in fact, conducting joint LSD research in the Army Chemical Center at Edgewood, Maryland, at the time that Andrija Puharich served there as a Captain.

See also: David Guyatt, 'Police State of Mind', FT95:34–39.

with Vice-President Al Gore.

Of course, if The Nine really are the ancient gods of Egypt, then surely there could be fewer more significant events than their return. One may be justified in thinking that the more leading politicians who fall under their influence the better; but are they really the ancient Ennead of Egypt? Can it be that they have actually returned to sort us all out, scattering love and enlightenment from their high moral ground?

Tom, in *The Only Planet of Choice*, chooses his words carefully as he explains that all the races of the Earth were seeded from space-gods – except one, the "indigenous race", the blacks. He is very careful to urge us not to make an issue out of this. After all, it's not the black race's fault that they have no divine spark like the rest of us.

ALL THE RACES OF THE EARTH COME FROM SPACE GODS

Bobby Horne, he first hypnotised them and then suggested that they were in touch with The Nine – and lo, they were! Ira Einhorn – a close associate of Puharich's during the 1970s – confirmed to us that he believed that Puharich was "humanly directing" The Nine communications.¹¹

The evidence we have gathered strongly suggests that Tom and his fellow gods orig-



PSI: Channeller Phyllis Schlemmer.

inated, not in the stars, but behind closed doors as part of a CIA mind control experiment. And what happened to that experiment? Now with hundreds of thousands of devotees, some in very high places, can The Nine be deemed a success? Of course, that depends very much on what the CIA had in mind. With their subtle racist propaganda, perhaps the flaky New Age Nine should worry the hell out of us. **Fr**

RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED READING

KEY BOOKS ON THIS SUBJECT

The Only Planet of Choice Phyllis Schlemmer (1992)
The Search for the Manchurian Candidate John Marks (1980)
Psychic Warfare John White (ed) (1988)

RECOMMENDED SURFING

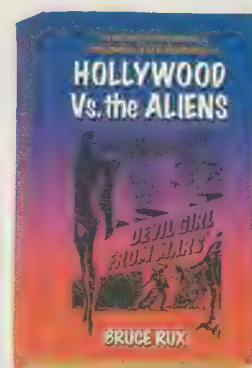
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Egypt News archive
[www.io.com/~hambone/web/RV/mind control index](http://www.io.com/~hambone/web/RV/mind%20control%20index)

NOTES

1. Stuart Holroyd, *Prelude to the Landing on Planet Earth* (W H Allen, London, 1977), p159.
2. The history of the Nine is told in Puharich's *Uri* (W H Allen, London, 1974); Holroyd (op. cit.); Phyllis V Schlemmer & Mary Bennett, *The Only Planet of Choice* (Gateway Books, Bath, 1996).
3. See *Uri Geller, My Story* (Robson Books, London, 1975) and *Uri Geller & Guy Lyon Playfair, The Geller Effect* (Jonathan Cape, London, 1986).
4. Schlemmer & Bennett, p331.
5. See introduction to James Hurtak's *The Keys of Enoch* (Academy for Future Sciences, Los Gatos, 1977) and Jacques Vallée, *Messengers of Deception* (And/Or Press, Berkeley, 1979).
6. Martin Gardner, *Science: Good, Bad and Bogus* (Prometheus Books, Buffalo, 1981), pp287–288.
7. Mary Bennett & David S Percy, *Dark Moon* (Aulis Publishers, London, 1999), p486.
8. Telephone interview with Palden Jenkins, 30 July 1998.
9. See Terry L Milner, 'Rattling out Puharich', posting on various websites eg <http://www.hia.com/pcr/> (1996).
10. Interview with Uri Geller, 10 February 1998.
11. Telephone interview with Ira Einhorn, 27 August 1998.
12. On the CIA's mind control projects, see John Marks, *The Search for the Manchurian Candidate: The CIA and Mind Control* (W W Norton, London, 1979).

involvement in CIA mind-control research.
Source: Sarfatti's homepage: www.hia.com/pcr/

BRUCE RUX



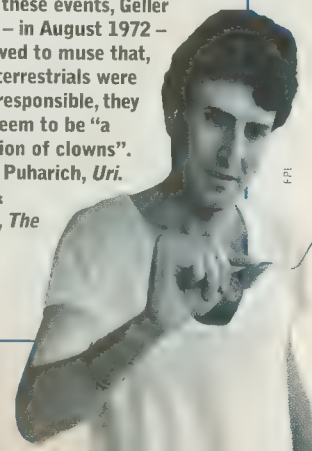
Rux, another American writer who has explored the connection between The Nine and the intelligence agencies, writes: "Lab Nine shows all the hallmarks of being an intelligence fraud, one of numerous disinformation sources employed by that particular community." Source: Bruce Rux, *Hollywood vs The Aliens* (Frog, Berkeley, 1993, p323).

JAMES HURTAK

Hurtak was second-in-command and 'spiritual leader' of the Ossining Group and occasionally investigated UFO incidents with intelligence implications or connections. Via his Academy for Future Sciences (AFFS), he confirmed that Puharich worked for the US intelligence services. Source: private email to the authors from Kim Farmer of AFFS, 24 Sept 1998. Homepage: www.affs.org/

URI GELLER

Geller's position on the events has been that, as he was in hypnotic trance when channelling, he cannot vouch for the reliability of either the information or its source. He does, however, confirm some of the paranormal events that surrounded him and Puharich during their partnership, which Puharich has attributed to The Nine. But faced with the sheer pointlessness of these events, Geller himself – in August 1972 – was moved to muse that, if extraterrestrials were indeed responsible, they would seem to be "a civilisation of clowns". Source: Puharich, *Uri. Geller & Playfair, The Geller Effect*.



the man who cried

WOLF

Manuel Blanco Romasanta claimed to be a werewolf and faced the death penalty for a series of murders in mid-19th century Spain. **Jack Romano** tells his story. Additional material by **Bob Rickard**. Main illustration by **Daniel Mackie**.

Mention werewolves and most people think of folklore, tall tales to frighten children. The story of Manuel Blanco Romasanta is different; he was, by his own admission, a wolfman, who had committed a whole series of gruesome murders, in the middle of the last century. If what he said was true, then this is the first and perhaps only case in which a 'werewolf' gives his point of view without being tortured for the 'truth'. The case is also unique in that it was fully and fairly chronicled, properly investigated and carefully written up. It remains one of the most celebrated 'werewolf' cases on mainland Europe.

Romasanta was born in 1819 in Riguero, a small village in Northern Spain. He was a handsome child, popular and well-liked. Precociously dextrous, he gained a reputation for making excellent rope and flails (used for separating wheat from chaff). He also tackled jobs that were normally reserved for women – cooking, sewing, crochet (at which he was particularly adept) and lacemaking. This was very odd behaviour for the time and it prompted ribald comments, but the men who knew him saw it as some slight effeminate eccentricity that he would eventually grow out of. It was, perhaps, the first pointer to his complex and ambiguous personality.

He was a most likeable and agreeable character, noted for his lovely, clear and inordinately large brown eyes. He was also quiet, humble and unassuming. He would chat to anyone and exhibited great kindness to many, being especially generous to those who were worse off than himself. In addition, he often helped out at the parish church, where the sacristan became extremely fond of him. He usually led the singing and the recital of the Rosary.

As a young man he became an itinerant salesman, travelling from village to village peddling a variety of goods and hardware. He specialised in lace veils for ladies – which he bought in Chaves, in Portugal – then sold on at a small profit. At the age of 30, he fell in love with Manuela Garcia, a pretty woman who lived in a distant village called Rebordechao. She was separated from her husband and had a daughter, Petronila. Romasanta persuaded the mother and child into going with him to Santander where, he said, he had found them positions working as house servants to a priest who was a most kindly man and would treat them like his own family. The mother and daughter accordingly went, and Romasanta was delighted. He even visited their relatives in Rebordechao, bringing letters from Manuela and Petronila, expressing their happiness in their new position.

This convinced Manuela's sister Benita that Romasanta was genuine, so she, with her young son, also accompanied Romasanta to



**HE RIPPED OUT
THE THROATS OF
HIS VICTIMS**

THE MANSIELL COLLECTION



MAN INTO BEAST

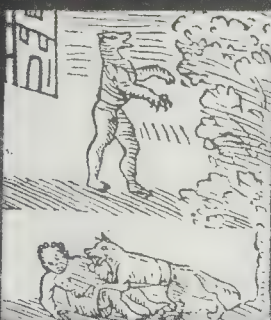
SOME KEY WEREWOLF MOMENTS.

5TH CENTURY BC

Herodotus records that a man named Each Neurian "changes himself once a year into the form of a wolf and he continues in that form for several days, after which he resumes his former shape."

1573: DÔLE, FRANCE

After a savage wolf attacked armed horsemen and later the remains of several children were found dead and partly eaten, the authorities licensed a werewolf hunt. Two months and two more child murders later, the hunt leaders arrested Gilles Garnier, a hermit, and his wife. He confessed to killing and eating two children (not, apparently, the recent victims) and was burned alive on 18 January 1574.



1589: COLOGNE, GERMANY

Peter Stubbs (or Stumpf) claimed to have a magic belt of wolfskin that allowed him to become a werewolf (above). He said (probably under torture) that, for 25 years, he had raped, killed and eaten mostly women and children. He also admitted to incest and devouring his own son. The court took him seriously and sentenced him to a protracted, painful death.

1598: ANGERS, FRANCE

Hunters tracked two wolves after a boy was found torn apart. The chase cornered Jacques Roulet, a beggar, who admitted to being a werewolf. The court took pity on him and sent him to a madhouse.

1598: ST CLAUDE, FRANCE

Pierre Gandillon, his two sisters and his son were all accused of witchcraft and lycanthropy after one sister attacked two children in an orchard. One dying child described their assailant as a wolf with human hands. In prison the family frequently went on all fours. Pierre confessed and they all died at the stake.

Santander, where he promised to find her a position as maid to a wealthy household. Again, Romasanta was the perfect friend – he came back to the village with letters and gifts from Benita and her son. Such were his persuasive talents that another woman, Antonia Rua, was enticed into following him to Santander, with her daughter Peregrina. Antonia left behind an older daughter, Maruja, whom Romasanta took under his wing and treated like his own child. This aroused some comment, but some 17 months later, her mother wrote asking that Maruja should join her. Romasanta was pleased to oblige, chaperoning the girl on her long trip to Santander some 400 miles (644km) away.

To the poverty-stricken villagers, Romasanta's offers of well-paid jobs in a big town were too good to turn down. He seemed to be very well connected and capable of finding employment for all and sundry. He explained that in a big city, good, loyal servants who were prepared to work hard were not easy to find, and he effectively set himself up as a kind of agent. Thus began a long sequence of such transactions, with perhaps another dozen people leaving their villages to take up jobs as servants, maids, grooms and footmen in Spain's northern cities, all kindly arranged by Roma-santa, who appeared to want nothing in return.

But for some it was too much to swallow. What was in it for Romasanta? Even the most charitable of men had to make a living. A mood of disquiet arose and, in a nasty twist, more than one suggested that Romasanta was taking people into the mountains to kill them. It was even suggested that he removed their fat to sell, for a small fortune, to Portuguese witches for use in their magical rites.

Such ancient beliefs were strong in rural Spain and many survive into the present. As recently as

1928, Richard Strachey – nephew of Bloomsbury author and critic Lytton Strachey – faced certain death at the hands of a gypsy court which accused him of being a Sacamantecas, a demon that sucks away the sweet fat of babies. Strachey's friend, Gerald Brennan – who makes light of the incident in his book *South from Granada* – was obliged to rescue him by asking the town mayor to send a posse of soldiers. It is evident from the reluctance of the gypsies to give up Strachey to the mayor that they were convinced they had caught a genuine ghoul.

Away from the coastal resorts, much of Spain is still wild, with tall mountain ranges, vast forests and a damp, foggy climate. Much of the soil is poor and the terrain inhospitable. There are still wolves in Spain as well as wild horses, buzzards, eagles and snakes. In contrast, the centre of Spain is virtually desert, littered with ruined castles and monasteries, and blessed with spectacular sunsets. The whole country is a perfect setting for supernatural stories. Spain is also Europe's third largest country – only Russia

IT WAS HIS DESTINY TO BE A WOLF

and France have a bigger landmass. In the 19th century, transport was virtually non-existent, and the only way to get about was to walk. Thus, each year, there were enormous migrations across the country, as peasants and villagers shifted to better pastures, or went to the massive grainfields of Castile to assist with the harvest, or made pilgrimages to holy sites. These journeys could take weeks, and en route, travellers were open to all sorts of attack from brigands, wild animals and disease. It's easy to see how belief in witches, werewolves, and the evil eye persisted, and it's also why, if someone 'disappeared' for a while, nobody would ask questions.

Romasanta scoffed at the growing rumours about him – but, disinclined to face charges, he ran away from Rebordechao to Castile, where he invented a completely new life for himself. He called himself 'Antonio Gomez', claiming to be a widower, and took up the trade of nail maker. In 1852, he moved to a nearby village, Verin, and worked as a farmhand and harvester. However, he was traced by three villagers from Rebordechao, who recognised him and had him arrested. The mayor immediately had him jailed, then transferred to a more secure prison in a town called Allariz.

The bombshell dropped in Allariz. To everyone's surprise, Romasanta, under no pressure, promptly confessed to multiple abduction and murder. What's more, he volunteered information on four other

recent murders – a young girl on her way to the fair at Viana (on the Portuguese border), a lady from Chaguazoso, a vagrant from Albar and an old woman from Fornelos. These towns and villages are all separated from each other by long distances; it was clear that Romasanta had travelled further and more quickly than anyone had suspected.

But there were bigger surprises to come. In front of a jury – which included priests – Romasanta put up a spirited defence. So far, he had only been suspected of murder, but in his open, ingenuous manner, he claimed that since he was 13 years old, he had been possessed by an extraordinary force, which compelled him from time to time to become a werewolf, lusty for blood and death. He was 'convinced that someone – possibly his mother, father or an aunt –

for reasons unknown, had cursed him. At first he fought the urges, he said, but within six months he felt an overwhelming desire to experiment with his new-found powers.

Romasanta said he was drawn to the mountains at Couso where he found two werewolves awaiting



DEADLY: This 16th century pamphlet claimed to show 'The Life and Death of Peter Stubbs' (see panel on facing page).

him. 'Genaro' and 'Antonio' were from Valencia and suffered from the same form of possession as he did. Together, they changed into wolves and ran wild for four or five days, after which they all recovered their human form. From that day, Romasanta said, he was certain that he was bewitched and this was his destiny. He claimed to have suffered great anguish struggling against it, but there was no escaping it.

How did he shapeshift? Easy, said Romasanta – when stricken by a werewolf attack he just stripped off his clothes and rolled around on the ground for a couple of minutes, then he would rise as a wolf. Using his teeth and claws, he ripped out the throats and lungs of his victims and ate them, leaving nothing but bones. "What was it like?" asked one judge. "Fantastic, powerful, incredibly exhilarating," replied Romasanta. Words could not describe the sensation: as a werewolf, you became intoxicated with freedom, strength and unlimited confidence. You could not be killed, harmed, or wounded. Imbued with an awesome strength and stamina, nothing could tire you. It was a magnificent feeling.

Once you had experienced this, there was no going back. You lost all sense of reason, yet oddly enough retained both your memory and a conscience. Because of this, when you returned to human shape, the memory of your crimes haunted you. Romasanta said he often cried bitterly in secret. "Then why did you continue along this path?" a judge asked. Romasanta couldn't explain, except to say that "When you are bewitched, as I was, the choice is not yours to make."

In 1852, on 29 June – the feast of Saints Peter and Paul – Romasanta was struck by a blinding headache and, when he recovered, he declared that he had lost all his desire for blood and murder. He interpreted this as being a sign that his bewitchment (which apparently had a fixed term) had

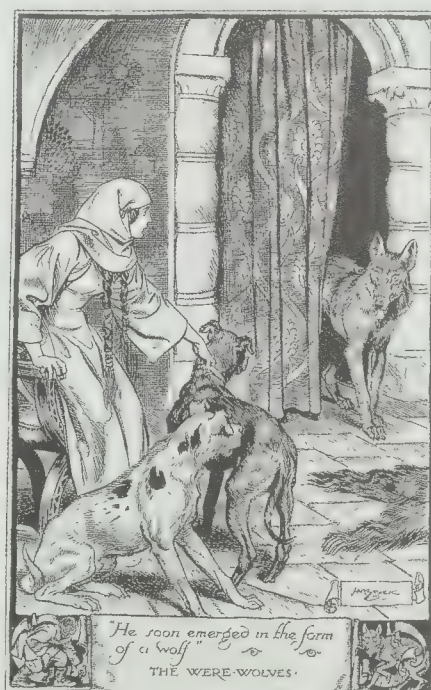
WAS HE SIMPLY MAD OR WAS HE POSSESSED?

ended. That was why he had allowed himself to be caught, he said, and why he confessed his crimes. The feast day of Saints Peter and Paul is a holy day of obligation for all Roman Catholics. The significance of the date would not have been lost on his listeners.

Romasanta's sincerity gave his statements a ring of authenticity, and he himself set about finding proof to implicate himself, taking the judge and jury to various remote locations where, sensationally, he dug up human bones. One skeleton was recognised as being that of Manuela Garcia, his first victim, while a pelvis was identified as once belonging to her sister Benita.

At another site – where he had killed Maruja Ria, the girl he had befriended for nearly 18 months – Romasanta broke into floods of tears as he vividly recalled how the girl had pleaded for her life, and beseeched him in God's name for mercy. But, he said, he had become a wolf and was obliged to comply with destiny.

All of this was written down by a court stenographer, who was so traumatised by what he heard that he broke protocol and cursed Romasanta in the name of God. Romasanta had taken a dislike to this man and turned on him with alacrity. With a menacing glint in his eyes and his face contorted with hatred, he snarled: "You are lucky that the werewolf has left me." At this the judge, fearing a fracas, produced a pistol and warned Romasanta against trying any untoward tricks. Romasanta smiled, saying with apparent sadness: "You don't know what you are saying, sir. The curse has left me, but were I to



SURPRISE: This 15th century woodcut shows a gentleman of Livonia revealing his secret ability.

1603: BORDEAUX, FRANCE

Jean Grenier, aged 14, confessed to killing and eating at least 50 children. He implicated other 'werewolves' during his trial but there was no substantiation. He said he was given a wolfskin and magic ointment during a forest ritual, presided over by a "black man".

Eventually, the judge accepted that the boy was (in his father's words) "a boastful idiot" but suffered from 'lycanthropy', imagining himself to be a wolf. He was remanded to a monastery for care and died in 1610.



1685: ESCHENBACH, GERMANY

A wolf was blamed for gruesome killings of a number of children. It was tricked into jumping over a well (above), fell in, was caught and hanged.

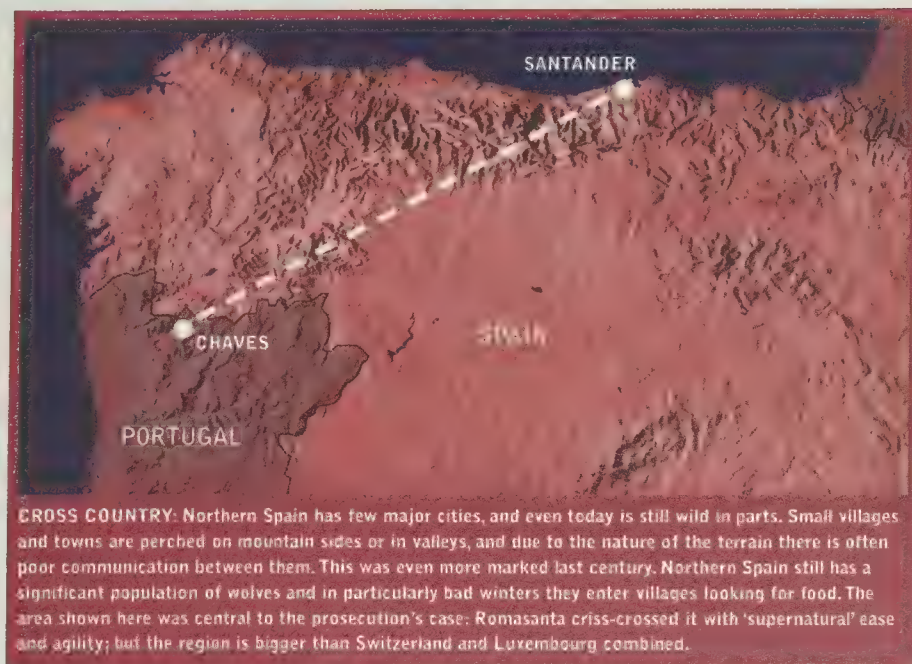


1764: GEVAUDON, FRANCE

The deaths of over 100 people were attributed to a ferocious creature that was fearless, cruel and relentless in its attacks (above). Locals were convinced it was a human in animal form. It was killed eventually, in 1766, by a royal archer after a huge hunt through three provinces. Although regularly described by modern writers as a werewolf, early documents suppose it to be a hyena, leopard or panther.

1847: PARIS, FRANCE

For months, several cemeteries had been raided by a fearful beast, described as half-animal, half-human, believed to be a werewolf. Corpses were dragged from graves, mutilated and partly eaten. The hunt lasted nearly a year and in March 1849, a young soldier, François Bertrand, was caught. Driven by strong fantasies of torture and necrophilia, he was exonerated of cannibalism and given a one-year jail sentence.



CROSS COUNTRY: Northern Spain has few major cities, and even today is still wild in parts. Small villages and towns are perched on mountain sides or in valleys, and due to the nature of the terrain there is often poor communication between them. This was even more marked last century. Northern Spain still has a significant population of wolves and in particularly bad winters they enter villages looking for food. The area shown here was central to the prosecution's case: Romasanta criss-crossed it with 'supernatural' ease and agility; but the region is bigger than Switzerland and Luxembourg combined.

become a wolf, even you, a rational man, would be so terrified that you could not fire the gun; furthermore, the bullets could never harm me."

Because of Romasanta's insistence that he had been bewitched, the judge had him sent for medical examination. He was systematically tested for physical abnormalities, mental capacity, and phrenological condition. He turned out to be in perfect all-round health. His skull was examined carefully by the phrenologist who pronounced him to be a highly intellectual, albeit uneducated individual, with a "somewhat prominent forehead". His attitude throughout examination was mild and compliant, but it was noted that occasionally, especially under duress, he showed flashes of "unbridled ferocity and arrogance". However, the overall conclusion was that Romasanta was sound in mind and body, with full understanding of what he had done, and full responsibility for his actions.

Romasanta was condemned to death on 6 April 1853. The case was then referred to the 'Audience of La Coruna' - a legal body that was required to ratify the death sentence. There is no question that Romasanta was treated fairly and had an open, unbiased trial. While peasants and villagers might believe in witches and werewolves; city dwellers, especially priests and judges, were more sceptical. In fact the priests were keen to stamp out this type of superstition. If anything, the trial was biased in his favour even though he had deliberately condemned himself.

The trial and its implications sent

FIST OF FURY: Amulets such as this Fist of St Andrew were believed to be a powerful deterrent against werewolves.



shockwaves throughout Catholic Spain. The radical, anti-clergy press used the case to expose what they saw as superstition and lies, fomented by the church in order to keep the peasantry in line; while the conservative press used it to highlight the poor moral state and decadence of the nation. The debate raged

long and hard, but among all the crossfire and counter accusations one thing was unquestioned - Romasanta was guilty and would hang.

However, at the Audience a young and aspiring lawyer called Manuel Figueroa took up Romasanta's case. His defence strategy focused on various statements made by Romasanta himself, essentially that while he was committing these crimes, he was bewitched - he had lost his reason and therefore acted without pre-conceived malice. Figueroa added that there had been many instances in the past where, fuelled by religious zeal, or a misplaced desire to impress, many innocent people had admitted to things they could never have done.

In Figueroa's opinion, there was no real evidence linking the discovery of bones with the supposed victims. "We are facing here," he said, "a simple madman, who for some reason believes he can change into a wolf and he committed these crimes only in his imagination." Because of his madness, Romasanta's statements were meaningless. He would admit to anything you cared to charge him with.

In an extraordinary, riotous hearing, Figueroa vigorously pressed home his point. He laughed at the 'medieval' concept of werewolves and mocked those who maintained they existed. He also claimed he had proof that at least four of the skeletons were nothing to do with Romasanta. This was modern Spain, he sneered, not the Middle Ages when people were burned on suspicion of witchcraft.

His comments created a sensation and the case took on a fresh aspect. Was Romasanta mad, or demonically possessed, or simply a cunning murderer using the 'werewolf' story as a front for his crimes?

The newspapers whipped themselves into a frenzy and, for days on end, it was front page news,

coming to the attention of an Englishman, Doctor Phillips, an eminent expert on what was then called 'electro-biology' but which we now call hypnotism.

Phillips had seen it all before. There was no need to complicate the issue, he wrote to the Spanish Ministry of Justice, explaining that Romasanta was obviously a lycanthrope - someone who, through illness or manipulation, imagined themselves to be a werewolf - with no sense of responsibility for his actions. It was unusual, but not unknown. More than once under laboratory conditions, he said, he had personally hypnotised perfectly normal subjects into believing they were furious wolves. He duly sent the Spanish authorities a file of notes and newspaper reports of his experiments, and offered to repeat the experiment in front of them, if they considered it necessary. Romasanta, said Doctor Phillips, could quite conceivably have been deeply hypnotised by persons unknown.

The Audience, influenced by Dr Phillips' arguments and the vehemence of Figueroa's defence, commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment for kidnap and illegal detention. The murders were never attributed. However, the press would not let go of the story, and it was partly due to their pressure that the sentence was changed once more to death by garrote. The contradictions of the defence case were pointed out; for example, how did Romasanta cover massive distances with such apparent ease? And what about the way in which he callously lured people away from their villages with the promise of jobs? This was the premeditated behaviour of a cynical killer, it was said. Again, Romasanta's rollercoaster luck changed; this time the Queen of Spain issued an order commuting the sentence to 'perpetual imprisonment'.

Gradually the furor died down, but there was one more twist. In jail Manuel Romasanta was a model prisoner and a minor celebrity. He sat quietly all day long, painstakingly rolling woollen thread into skeins. Occasionally, faced with curious visitors, he would lift by a few centimetres the black lace veil that always covered his face, and observe them with a demure smile. The women's clothes he always wore didn't seem to embarrass him one bit.

SOURCES

Jose Ramon Ferra, *Ancient Tradition: Wolves, Wolverines and Werewolves* (Madrid, 1995).
Antonio Fraguas, *Galician Folklore* (Edicions do Castro, La Coruna; 4th Edition, 1993).
Gerald Brennan, *South from Granada* (Hamish Hamilton, 1957).

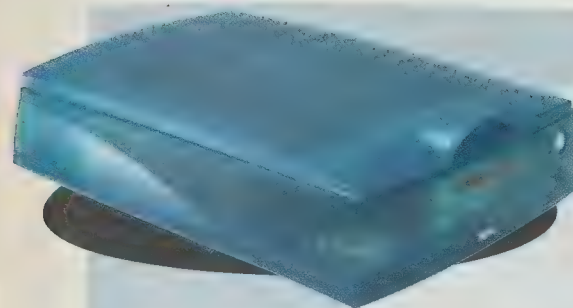
RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED READING KEY BOOKS ON THIS SUBJECT

The Book of Were-wolves
Sabine Baring-Gould (1865)
Man into Wolf Robert Eisler (1951)
The Werewolf Montague Summers (1933)
The Werewolf of Paris Guy Endore (1998)

RECOMMENDED SURFING KEY WEBSITES ON THIS SUBJECT

www.pitt.edu/~dash/werewolf.html
German werewolf legends
www.rscollections.com/werewolf/index2.html
The Werewolf Page
www.best.com/%7EBrakken/werewolf.html
Of Weres and Wolves



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Radio's war of the words

BRUCE LANIER WRIGHT TREADS A CAREFUL PATH TO EXPLORE THE LEGAL TRIBULATIONS CURRENTLY SURROUNDING WELL-KNOWN RADIO PERSONALITY ART BELL.

Art Bell, the extremely popular and saucer-friendly US radio personality, has lately taken to characterising his life as "a hell", and given recent events it's hard not to agree. We may never get closer to the secrets of the universe with Art, but we are poised to learn more about America's libel laws.

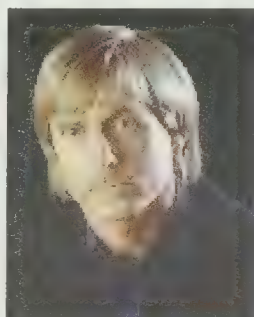
FT readers may remember Bell's sudden, abortive "retirement" of last October (FT19). Rumours attributed his strange disappearance to everything from MIB activity to the arrival of a time traveller, but a federal lawsuit filed in May 1999 shed light on its more mundane cause. Bell's son, Arthur Bell IV, is suing his local school district over his sexual assault by a former substitute teacher, an HIV-positive individual now serving a life sentence for this and similar incidents. According to Bell, his son is understandably traumatised and needed his full attention during the weeks of radio silence.

Adding to Bell's problems is a lawsuit against a Tennessee radio station concerning statements made on a show hosted by Ted Gunderson, a luminary of the satanic ritual sexual abuse racket. According to court transcripts, a December 1997 guest of Gunderson's, David Hinkson, claimed that Bell had once been indicted for child molestation. While acknowledging that this was simply hearsay from "a credible source", Hinkson helpfully urged listeners to badger Bell concerning the truth of these charges. This they did in droves, Bell claims, making it all the harder to cope with his son's situation.

But troubles come in threes, and Bell's most spectacular ongoing battle is now known to many aficionados simply as "the Feud". The Feud began in March 1998, with an appearance on Bell's show by regular guest David John Oates, a promoter of "reverse speech" – the notion that human speech, when recorded and played backwards, reveals hidden insights into the speaker's beliefs and intentions. Oates modestly claims that reverse speech will "change the entire course of Western civilisation", and peddles training courses and special tape recorders that make the process considerably easier than in those days when we were all searching Beatles albums for clues concerning Paul McCartney's health.

Bell was impressed with reverse speech

when Oates used it on the statements of NASA spokesmen, but on this show Oates turned the technique on another frequent Bell guest, the remote viewer Ed Dames, and found "metaphorical content" indicating that Dames can be economical with the truth. Considering that Dames once claimed that comet Hale-Bopp would destroy all earthly plant life, this seems reasonable, but Bell took umbrage and Oates found himself exiled from Bell's show. Naturally, both men have supporters who took to the Internet with poorly spelled calumnies; meanwhile, Oates landed a berth as a regular guest host on Jeff Rense's *Sightings on the Radio*, a naked imitation of Bell's format.



FIGHTING TALK: (From top) Ed Dames, David John Oates and Art Bell.

Enter, then, one Robert A M Stephens of St Ignatius, Montana, a self-described "NASA contractor" who joined the ufological world in October 1998 with Internet postings concerning a Montana UFO sighting.

The NASA affiliation garnered considerable attention in saucerhead circles, and Stephens parlayed these into a December appearance on Art Bell's show, ostensibly to debate Bell's friend Richard Hoagland (FT123) and defend NASA's reputation against Hoagland's charges of wide-ranging conspiracy. Stephens' rambling performance, however, was not a success.

After Stephens managed to call Hoagland both a "serious researcher" and a "pathological liar", Bell cut his appearance short for the excellent reason that he was making no sense.

Soon, Stephens began to suffer from the all-too-common ufological phenomenon of CV deflation. His claim to be a former member of the US Navy's elite Seals dissolved when real ex-Seals got wind of it, while his NASA affiliation turned out to consist primarily of computer-aided drafting for various program contractors, not precisely the high-level connection of which he likes to boast. (In June, he told a Montana newspaper that "I have a lot of influence in the agency", but NASA does not seem to concur.)

These setbacks did not prevent Stephens from continuing attacks against both Bell and Hoagland. On 3 April 1999, on an Oates-hosted edition of *Sightings*, Stephens accused Bell of "trafficking in various aspects of pornography". Oates noted, rather nervously, that "we need to point out this is rumor only" (!) but the disclaimer failed to deflect Bell from launching a \$60 million lawsuit against both men.

On 12 June, the *contretemps* took its most bizarre turn yet, on another Oates-hosted episode of *Sightings*. After opening with a keening country-and-western call for "patriots" to "stand among the brave", Oates explained that he had sought refuge at Stephens' Montana home, surrounded by "patriotic Americans" who had pledged to keep him safe "in the light of literally hundreds of death threats" from enraged Art Bell fans. Oates noted repeatedly that he was heavily armed.

If the amusement value or body count of this situation climbs, I shall report back.

FOOTNOTES

1. <http://www.artbell.com/court/tenneshb.html>.
2. <http://www.missoulain.com/archives/index.inn?loc=detail&doc=/1999/June/9-549-news5.txt>.
3. At this writing, the broadcast is archived at <http://www.broadcast.com/shows/endoftheline/9904/endo403.ram>, but the reader is advised that links connected with the Stephens-Oates lawsuit seem to be dying on a daily basis.
4. Archived at <http://www.broadcast.com/shows/endoftheline/9906/endo612.ram>; see above note

www.artbell.com

www.davidjohn.com

www.artbell.com



Send in the clones

ON 18 JUNE, THE RAËLIAN UFO RELIGION HELD A CONFERENCE IN MONTREAL, CANADA, PROMOTING ITS NEW CLONING VENTURES, CLONAIID AND CLONAPET. CARL AMABILI WAS THERE.

Clonaid offers wealthy, infertile or homosexual couples the option to clone a child from their genes. Raël, founding leader of this ET/cloning movement, believes that cloning will help humankind achieve 'eternal life'.

Raël – formally French racing journalist Claude Vorilhon – has been preaching since he was contacted by the Elohim – in Hebrew "they who come from the skies" – in 1973. Since becoming their messenger he has been travelling the world giving lectures. He claims that all life on Earth was actually developed and created in Elohim laboratories 25,000 years ago. Flashy rituals like 'sensual meditation' and bold statements such as: "Jesus, whom we [the Elohim] were able to recreate from a cell preserved before his crucifixion", have helped popularise the movement, which boasts of 35,000 members in 85 countries.

The auditorium of the Clonaid conference was jam-packed with Raëlian enthusiasts who had come to listen to their guru and his cloning specialists. Scientific Director of Clonaid and Raëlian bishop Dr Brigitte Boisselier spoke first. "Parents have the right to decide to have a baby carrying one of their genetic codes. Science is the religion of Raëlians and cloning lets us express ourselves through eternal life." Clonaid® also offers Insuraclone®, a service that provides the sampling and safe storage of cells (in case of accident) for the small fee of \$50,000 (US), and Clonapet®, which needs no explanation.

Next up was Dr Richard Seed, a physician who, back in 1983, produced the first successful human embryo transfer as a treatment for female infertility. He is inspired by visions of life-extension and strongly believes that he will succeed in rejuvenating himself and his wife, Gloria.

Seed is an old romantic who wants more than anything, in the twilight of his life, a dose of immortality. He is the first to admit the slim chances of success in the near future, but is more than willing to begin research in human cloning and cellular rejuvenation.

Asked about Dolly, the sheep cloned at the Roslyn Institute in Scotland, Seed said he didn't believe that she was a true clone. "The Roslyn Institute behaved in a very peculiar manner – cloning from an adult, which has never been done before. They produced not only Dolly, but also a one-day old death and two abortives. But they threw them away! They were all cloned from adult nuclei and they tossed them out! Nobody would ever do that, it doesn't make any sense."

Dolly isn't the only thing Seed is sceptical about. "I am not a Raëlian!" he told me, chuckling. "I don't care about Eternal Life. But that Raël, he's..." Smiling, Seed cut himself off in mid-flow. He shook his head and then nodded, "I am trying to sell Raël on rejuvenation, that's where the money is!"

Everyone there seemed hooked on the idea of living forever. Randolphe Wicker, founder

of Clone Rights United Front, encouraged the audience to "Preserve your reproductive rights by preventing the outlawing of cloning".

Wicker believes human cloning will render every individual fertile and completely transform family life. More worrying is the "multiple cloning of geniuses, producing dozens of twins of a widely admired genius like Albert Einstein or BERTRAND RUSSELL or STEVEN SPEILBERG! [sic]" But, "of course," he adds, "cloning technology could be abused by cultists like Waco leader David Koresh!" And Rael?

Finally, Raël took the podium and worked the audience into a new age alien love-in. "Some people associate Raëlians with suicide cults. They ask, 'When will they have a collected [sic] suicide?' I say, sorry, we are here for a long time! We enjoy life! It is important to enjoy life, your sexual life, it's very important!" With the crowd roaring its approval, Raël sets himself up for the future: "Unlike Pope John Paul II, a different person with a different name, Raël the Second will be the real thing!"



CLONE ARRANGER: Raël himself (right) addressed the crowd as did Dr Richard Seed (left), the controversial scientist who predicts that he will soon be able to clone a human. In 1983, he produced the first successful human embryo transfer as a treatment for female infertility.

He explained how Clonaid research will eventually enable "mankind to directly clone an adult person without having to go through the growth process and transfer memory and personality into the person. Then, we wake up after death in a brand new body – just like after a good night's sleep."

And the truth as to why the Raëlians are backing human cloning? "It is not only inevitable but it will unleash a torrent of research that will benefit mankind by exploding knowledge of medicine and biology." You can hear the ching of the cash registers now.

So, what is Raël's projected budget before research proves to be successful? One billion dollars (US) a year over a 20 year period. Although many of his devotees won't be around 20 years from now, I am sure they will rest in peace knowing that their hard-earned money – and genes – are being donated to such a noble cause.

See www.rael.org for more on the Raëlians.



CARL AMABILI is a freelance journalist living in Montreal. He can be contacted at carlbo@usa.net.

BRUCE LANIER WRIGHT

is a pop-culture historian and avid, if puzzled, forerunner from Texas. The author of two books, he is a contributing editor for *Strange* magazine.



Lost Ark

Beware – valleygator!

THE INTREPID CRYPTOZOOLOGIST DOESN'T ALWAYS NEED TO TRAVEL FAR IN SEARCH OF MYSTERIOUS CREATURES AS KARL SHUKER FOUND OUT IN DARKEST WEST BROMWICH...

It may be my home town, but West Bromwich in the West Midlands is more readily associated with soccer than cryptozoology – until the Sandwell Valleygator came on the scene, that is. Also nicknamed the Sandwell Snapper in early media accounts, it first reared its snouted head on 30 March of this year, when fisherman Mike Sinnatt saw what he initially thought to be “a marvellously shaped piece of wood”, measuring over 2ft (0.6m) long, suddenly come alive and attempt to seize an unsuspecting Canada goose on Swan Pool.

Situated in an RSPB reserve within the Sandwell Valley Country Park – a verdant oasis for nature right in the heart of urbanised West Brom – Swan Pool measures more than a mile (1.6km) in circumference and is not only inhabited by a rich variety of waterbirds, but is also popular for angling, yachting, and wind-surfing.

Or at least it was until, within a short time of Sinnatt's sighting, a dozen other similar reports had surfaced, all describing a fairly sizeable four-legged aquatic beast with a notable snout, long tail, and a penchant for snapping at anything avian or piscine that came too near. Eyewitnesses included local angler Tony Price and pool lifeguard Ricky Downes, who spied its two “very chunky” hind legs and tail.

Occurring so close to 1 April, the Sandwell Valleygator was originally dismissed by sceptics as an April Fool's hoax, but this was strenuously denied by Sandwell Council, who were so concerned about the potential danger posed to the general public by the creature that they closed the pool to all watersports throughout the Easter Bank Holiday (3–6 April). Needless to say, however, the considerable media publicity generated not only locally but also nationally and even internationally by Swan Pool's stealthy snapper resulted in a massive influx of visitors here (estimated at more than 9,000) during the Bank Holiday, all eagerly scanning the reed beds and shallows in search of its cryptic interloper.

As I deemed it highly unlikely that the creature would appear when confronted by such a barrage of human activity, I waited until the holiday period was over before visiting Swan Pool myself. Walking around this sizeable lake, peering at the large island at its centre, at the smaller pools and marshes fringing its border, and down into its murky depths, it swiftly became evident that an aquatic creature of the proportions described by the Valleygator's eyewitnesses could live out a secluded, rarely-spied existence here indefinitely.

Yet although neither the Valleygator itself nor any convincing reports of it surfaced during the Bank Holiday or my own subsequent

visit, official opinion as to its identity had by now veered away from the scenario of a vicious snap-happy crocodile, caiman, or suchlike to the rather more placid giant salamander. Specifically, the North American hellbender *Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*, which measures up to 30in (76cm) long, subsists upon small animal life such as frogs, fishes, snails, crustaceans, and insect larvae, and is native to the eastern United States. Such a beast could certainly survive, therefore, in the temperate, prey-filled waters of Swan Pool. However, the fatal flaw in this otherwise promising proposal is that this species is hardly ever maintained in captivity by private individuals—hence the chance of one having escaped and taken up residence in Swan Pool is extremely remote.

On 7 April, Swan Pool was formally re-opened, with the Sandwellmander, as it had by now been redubbed in media



HOLIDAY SNAP: Author Karl Shuker keeps an eye out for the “valleygator”.

accounts, no longer deemed to pose a risk to watersport enthusiasts. Or, to quote the optimistic words of Sandwell's senior countryside ranger Roy Croucher: “We have decided to re-open the pool on the basis that this thing is not going to leap out of the water and grab someone around the throat”.

Less than a week later, however, an unexpected water beast did make an appearance – a North American snapping turtle *Chelydra serpentina*, discovered sunbathing on a marsh close to Swan Pool. As its name suggests, this belligerent, sturdy species of freshwater tortoise is famous for snapping viciously, possesses a prominent snout, a long tail, and can grow up to 2ft (0.6m) long (its close relative the alligator turtle can reach lengths of almost 3ft (1m)). Hence it exhibits the very same features consistently described by eyewitnesses of the Swan Pool mystery beast. Moreover, in sharp contrast to the hellbender, the snapping turtle is commonly kept by amateur herpetologists, so an escapee (or even a deliberately released) specimen of this species turning up here is by no means implausible.

All of which only adds, therefore, to the mystery of why, or how, an unnamed Sandwell Council spokesman could confidently state in subsequent media accounts that this captured snapping turtle was not the elusive Swan Pool cryptid. How did he, or anyone else, know? Snapping turtles are readily able to walk on land, so one could easily have made its way back and forth between Swan Pool and any of the neighbouring marshes.

What certainly cannot be denied, at least at the time of writing this article (July 1999), is that since the snapping turtle's capture, nothing more has been heard of the Sandwell Valleygator, aka the Sandwellmander. Perhaps, when some initial media accounts nicknamed it the Sandwell Snapper, they were closer to the truth than anyone realised.

Mummy madness

STEVE MOORE QUESTIONS THE MOTIVES AND BIZARRE CONCEPTS OF HISTORY BEHIND THE WAY SOME DESERT DEAD FOLKS ARE BEING PRESENTED.

It's said that the name of the Taklamakan desert means “you go in, but you don't come out”, but sometimes that's not the case. At Cherchen, on the fringe of the Taklamakan, some folks have come out again... admittedly after some 4,000 years, rather dehydrated and quite dead, but very well-dressed. And making a lot of trouble... because they're variously described as Caucasian, European, or just plain “white”. And according to accepted wisdom, they just weren't supposed to be there. This is Xinjiang, China, after all.

For those who may have missed the colour pictures splashed across the world's press over the last few years (right), the Xinjiang mummies were first discovered by local archaeologists in 1978, although they only came to attention in the West in 1994, after Professor Victor Mair of the University of Pennsylvania found them on display in the museum at Urumqi. They appear to have been Caucasian sheep-herders and cloth-weavers who dressed like peacocks, and the burials span a period from about 2000 to 300 BC. Since then, the story's resurfaced occasionally, when the publicity machine starts working for academic conferences, or new books. And maybe it's the publicity machine that's the problem...

Looking over *FT*'s collection of clippings on the subject, it's obvious that, for all the intrinsic interest of the story itself, the way it's been presented over the years is quite curious too. There's talk, for instance, of “historical certainties unravelling” – as if there was ever any such beast as a “historical certainty” – and a lot of assumptions and prejudices (some of which may well be unconscious) that seem to hark back to the imperialist confrontation with China of a century ago.

Let's start with Victor Mair. He came across the mummies when he wandered away from a tour party in the Urumqi museum and found them in an unlocked room that wasn't on the official itinerary. From this he seems to have concluded that the Chinese didn't want Western visitors to know about the mummies – which suggests a rather unusual incompetence on their part in leaving the door open – and from there the media have built up a story of the Chinese suppressing the story because it destroys claims that their civilisation originated independently of western influence. The next thing we know, there's speculation that our mummified friends introduced bronze-working and the wheel to China.

Well, if the Chinese are a bit defensive, this would be understandable, after the barbarous way the western nations treated the Celestial Empire in the last century, stealing their territory and cultural treasures only being the start of it. I rather suspect the Chinese simply see the mummies as a Chinese problem, and probably regard the



intervention of Mair and his co-workers as a typical example of Western cultural imperialism that arrogantly insists it knows better than the local men on the spot.

Still, who were these “white European Caucasians”? In these days of PC, of course, it's not so good to call them “white” or “Caucasian” because that sounds like racial labelling – and besides, as the Caucasus region is actually in Asia, this doesn't sound anywhere near as startling as “European”. So they're called European – a political and geographical concept quite inappropriately applied to a racial question, particularly as there wasn't even a concept of “Europe” when the first mummies were buried. But if we call them European, then it's only a short step to the idea they actually travelled from Europe to Xinjiang, bringing civilisation with them to the poor benighted locals. No wonder the Chinese get pissed off.

Ah, but once we know they're Europeans, we can go on to speculate that our mummies are actually Celtic. Celtic? Well, around 600–900 AD, the local inhabitants spoke an Indo-European language called Tocharian, which has similarities to Celtic. You may notice that's a thousand years later than our mummies, of whose language we have no idea. But if we've decided that they're Celtic, we can bolster our case by comparing their textile patterns with Scottish tartans, which is what Elizabeth Wayland Barber has done in her new book, *The Mummies of Urumchi* (cue more from the publicity machine). Of course, Scottish tartans only date back 300 years, but...

So now we have a wandering Celtic tribe who've travelled from Europe and introduced civilisation to China. Of course, there's no actual evidence that our mummy-folk travelled anywhere, and it has to be remembered that the Celts originally appeared in Europe from the east. Maybe they came from Xinjiang, and the mummy-people were just the folks that got left behind. Of course, that's just speculation, but as there's no more evidence for it than kilted Celts travelling east, why not?

The biggest problem with the whole affair, though, is that there doesn't appear to be any evidence whatever that these people actually reached or contacted China at all. Because although Xinjiang is part of China now, it certainly wasn't 4,000 years ago. At the time of the first mummies, Chinese civilisation was restricted to the Yellow River Basin – and that's around 1,400 miles (2,300 km) away from Cherchen. Which is an awful long way. But why let awkward facts get in the way of a good fantasy?

SOURCES

Mail on Sunday, 20 Mar 1994; Times, 10 May 1996, 23 Mar 1998; South China Morning Post, 20 May 1996, 6 Feb 1999; Independent, 3 July 1998; plus many others.

SELECTED REFERENCES

Sandwell Express and Star, 31 Mar, 1–3, 5–8, 13, 14, 19 April 1999; Daily Mail, 2 Apr 1999; Sandwell Chronicle, 9 Apr 1999.



KARL SHUKER

has a lifelong interest in cryptozoology. He is a zoological consultant, lecturer and author of several books devoted to cryptozoology.



Mummy dearest



STEVE MOORE

has a long-time interest in the ancient world and the orient, and publishes the oracle, *The Journal of Yijing Studies*. He also edits *Fortean Studies*.



letters

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Now you see it...

In 1995 I was a passenger in my friend Catherine's car as we drove round Wiltshire looking for crop circles. I had been navigating by means of an Ordnance Survey map of the area, which I'd used on previous visits. On the back I'd drawn sketches of various crop circles that I'd entered, and small crosses on the map itself to indicate their positions. We parked the car next to Silbury Hill, I put the map by my feet on the floor of the car, and we got out, locked up, and climbed Silbury Hill. When we got back, the map had vanished. Nothing else was disturbed or missing, and the car showed no signs of a forced entry. We emptied the car and searched thoroughly. No map. Later that day we did the same again. Still no map. When Catherine got home to London, she searched every nook and cranny of the car, but still no map. She used the car for the next six months. Then one day she was utterly gob-smacked to find the map, in plain sight on the floor where I had originally left it!

Tim Mayne
London

Driving force

On New Year's Eve 1998, my husband invited me to a party in Richmond. I knew nothing other than it was a party and that I would not know anyone else there. He refused to give me any details of the type of venue, its address or any directions. I live in Dorking and I am not familiar with Richmond. I think I have visited the town only once or twice and that was 15 years ago. Since then, I've only touched its outskirts en route to other places. As we were driving, we talked about migratory birds finding the correct route and instances of cats and dogs tracking their owners to new addresses. When we were a couple of miles from the edge of Richmond, my husband said: "I want you to tell me where to go." "Don't be silly," I said. "I don't know where it is, I don't even know the address."

But he persisted, so I shut my eyes and concentrated. I had the impression of greyness with a dark vertical line to the right, so I said "At the next main junction, turn right". We turned right and the dark line moved slightly to the left. "The road will fork, take the left fork," "Take the next turning to the left," and so on, until the line disappeared and I felt we had arrived. "Stop here".

My husband stopped the car and turned the engine off and said, "Right, we'll walk from here." Worried, I said, "This is stupid, we could be miles away". He said, "We are actually parked outside".

We were outside a large church that looked deserted. I could not see any lights, hear any music or see any other people to indicate that there was a party there. But when we opened the door, the party was already in progress. So I had successfully guided us for several miles through main and side roads to the correct spot without knowing anything other than I was going somewhere in Richmond. The possibility of this happening by chance must be minimal. I had never been to the venue before nor to that area of Richmond – and, in fact, I doubt that I would be able to locate where it was on a map.

On each occasion, having given my husband the route to follow, I had opened my eyes and my directions were followed precisely. The line had seemed to indicate direction and dis-

tance, getting stronger as we neared the turnings. This is the only occasion on which I have tried this. Have any readers had similar experiences or can they offer an explanation?

Norma Perrott
Westcott, Surrey

Shook jong

After seeing your article on the ailment Koro [FT82:30 and page 66 this issue], whose victims believe their genitals are shrinking, I thought you might find the following interesting. It's an eyewitness account of an attack of Koro (known in Malaysia as *shook jong*) and of another peculiar illness, from page 394 of *Little Wilson and Big God*, the first part of the autobiography of Anthony Clockwork Orange Burgess:

"There were two... Eastern diseases, painful to see but dangerous only to the sufferer. One was *latah*, defined in Wilkinson's *Malay-English Dictionary* as 'a nervous paroxysmal disease aroused by suggestion and often taking the form of hysterical mimicry'. One Malay boy exhibited the symptoms when someone stupidly suggested to him that he was a bicycle: he pedalled himself to exhaustion, slept, foamed in spasm, and then woke to forget all about it. The other ailment, *shook jong*, had a similarly baffling cause, but affected only the Chinese. A Chinese male would be convinced that his penis was retracting into his scrotum and try to hold it to his leg by sticking a sharp knife in. The metaphysical explanation had something to do with the force of the yin overcoming the yang. It could end in hysteria and death. I actually saw a Chinese so afflicted in Kuala Lumpur. He stole a

superfine jeweller's knife and rammed it in screaming on the sunlit street. Laurence Durrell was very unwise to make a joke about this in his novel *Tunc*, suggesting that an amulet embossed with an anagram of his title might drive it away. *Shook jong* is no joke."

The above happened in 1955. The rest of Burgess's autobiography contains such gems as: first-hand accounts of witchcraft in Malaysia; a precognitive dream concerning the assassination of John F Kennedy; a novel of his (*Enderby Outside*) in which he prefigured the shooting of John Lennon, and several accounts of visions experienced by both himself and his first wife, Llewella Isherwood-Jones.

Garrick Alder
London

Full circle

In his "A circular argument" [FT125:46], Andy Thomas refers to *Guardian* journalist John Vidal's 1998 article on crop circles as an example of the cynicism cerealists routinely have to endure in their attempts to persuade the public that the phenomenon is not solely man-made. But it reached no conclusion either way. For all its errors (no argument from 'lan' Irving), at least Vidal bothered to contact circle-makers before deciding what's geometrically possible and what's not.

If John Mitchell's assertions are quoted accurately, I'm surprised. Geometry, whether basic, complex, 'sacred' or harmonic, on paper or landscape, is usually simple when created progressively, but always vastly more mystifying analysed backwards, when all manner of "impossibilities" reveal themselves.

Three more brief points: Andy and John seem not to have noticed that the patterns become tellingly more complex as nights grow longer. Circle-makers tend not to see their work as undermining mystery and mystical experience, as Andy suggests in characterising their 'position' as opposed to his own, so much as encouraging such experience – naturally, it's what artists do. And if Andy finds the profile of the Mitsubishi "crude" he should take it up with the car's designers.

Rob Irving
rob@circlemakers.org



SIMULACRA CORNER



This rude red pepper was photographed in Annerley, Queensland, by Arthur Chrenkoff.

The rampant aubergine was bought at Tesco's, somewhere in England, and snapped by Andrew Rowntree.



We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the editorial post box (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) and we'll pay a fiver or 10 dollars for any we use.

Child prodigies

A few days before the ceasefire was announced in Kosovo, I was seated at the dinner table with my family and asked my three-year-old daughter one of those absurdly abstruse questions parents occasionally ask offspring they know are far too young even to understand, let alone answer.

"So, Bethany," I said, "what is your considered opinion regarding the situation in Kosovo?" Her instant reply, brightly delivered, was: "Oh, Tito!", which she repeated when I asked her what she had said. Are there any examples of divination using the "random" utterances of very young children?

Anthony Purcell
Chelmsford, Essex

Our baby daughter Honor was born on 13 May in the Victoria ward on the 13th floor of Guy's Hospital in London at 13:56. She will be living with us at 13 Victoria Park. If she doesn't grow up to be a great forteen, then there is no justice.

Chris and Stephanie Precious
Dover, Kent

Mutant hunting

With regard to the inquiry about readers seeing cats with wings [FT114:16], I have seen such a creature. Back in 1975 my neighbourhood was on the edge of what was once one of Arizona's last true wilderness areas; now it's tract houses and luxury retirement golf communities. One of the original residents was an elderly widow with about 100 cats, all descended from a single pair. Of course, by that time, the generations were inbred as all hell, and bore little resemblance to average cats. The woman died suddenly, and the folks who dealt with her estate handled

the cats in a quick manner — they opened all the doors and windows and shoo'd them away. We were soon overrun with cats. Coyotes, foxes and golden eagles soon took care of the majority, and neighbours armed with .22 rifles took care of the rest.

One cat was left. I first noticed this strange beast at a distance, a small bluish feline with what looked like a pair of large wings hanging off the top of its rear pelvis. It had a face that looked like it had been hit by a brick, flat and grossly distorted. One eye was clearly larger than the other, and one side of the jaw had no lip covering. It looked quite ghastly, really. This cat seemed to take delight in killing all manner of native small wildlife and not eating them, and raiding local gardens with the sole purpose of smashing and trashing anything that grew. It got into my small garden twice in early summer, completely destroying it.

Once I watched this animal from a few feet away before it noticed me. It was thin, starving, deformed in face and body, and was covered with ticks, lice and all manner of clinging insects. The "wings" caught my attention. The two hanging off the pelvis were about 6in (15cm) long, 2in (5cm) wide at the base, perhaps an inch (2.5cm) wide at the end, and were covered with dirty fur. The cat saw me, drew back as if to attack, and the wings began to flail around in random directions. Then I noticed two deformed claws sticking out of the end of each tip. The cat let out a fearful scream and fled faster than I thought possible. When it turned, I noticed a second set of wings, much smaller than the first, stationary, on top of the creature's shoulders.

A few days later, I discovered that it had raided my garden for a third time, wiping out two months of work. The law at that time said a feral domestic animal that ruined garden crops could be legally hunted inside city limits. So I stalked the creature,

ambushed it and killed it with a single rifle shot. As its body was covered with vermin, I made no effort to collect it or get close enough to take photos. I had, by that time, figured that the cat didn't have real wings but secondary limbs, distorted and useless.

A friend of mine told me that such terrible deformities are common in cats (or other small domesticated animals) that have inbred over a number of generations. She also remarked that such deformities show up in populations that are either naturally isolated, as on small islands, or confined in a house, as in this case. She'd seen a number of "winged cats" before. (I prefer to call mine a "six-legged cat".) One had wings on pelvis and shoulders, the other just on the pelvis. I seem to recall that vestigial limbs are quite common on inbred animals, but they usually indicate severe enough damage to make the animal's life short and unpleasant. Usually they don't move too quickly and become a meal for something faster or larger.

Russ Williams
Prescott, Arizona

Punk cannibal

The report on the cannibal David Harker [FT124:11] was of particular interest to me and my friends, as a few days before his arrest he had turned up to a gig we played at the Filibuster & Firkin in Darlington. What I found amusing was the misinterpretation of the tattoos. The newspaper reports state they were 'disorder' and 'subhuman', giving the impression of self-assessed lunacy. In fact, the tattoos were 'Disorder' and 'The Subhumans', two mid-Eighties punk bands. Ironically, The Subhumans were militant vegetarians!

John Boundy
South Shields Tyne & Wear

Breakthrough

We'd like to point out that *Breakthrough* by Konstantin Raudive, complete with the accompanying 7" of EVP recordings (as mentioned in FT125:59), is available for £20 (inc p&p), or £4 for the 7" only, from Colin Smythe, P.O. Box 6, Gerrards Cross, Bucks, SL9 8XA. Tel 01753-886000

Chicago mystery

I noticed the brief article about the mysterious underwater wooden sausage thing found in the Chicago river [FT122:25]. After some investigation and a lucky strike, its purpose was revealed. It was designed during World War II to be an underwater fuel-transport tank for ships, to be towed just below the surface. However, it was never used. All this was discovered because the wife of the inventor who created it found the original plans while looking through his stuff in her basement.

Niles Eastman
Chicago

Cuba not occupied

The correction of the myth that the British invented concentration camps [Mythconceptions FT123:25] creates another myth: "Sadly for the Cubans, the USA swiftly took over Spain's imperial role, remaining in occupation until the Castro revolution of 1959."

American occupying forces were withdrawn in 1902 except for the area around Guantanamo Bay, which became and remains a US naval station known informally as Gitmo. Frank DeMarco
cwfan@email.msn.com

A3 on video

In the article on *Alternative 3* [FT121:28-31], Nick Austin said he was unaware of any videos of the spoof documentary. I once spied a copy at my local video emporium here in Japan. However, I failed to rent it at the time and later returned to discover a hair salon where once the video-store had been. On whose orders I wonder?

Neil Oakes
neilroakes@yahoo.com



Crabs at Ayers Rock

On a recent trip to Uluru (Ayers Rock) in Australia, my boyfriend Shan climbed the rock and noticed small horse-shoe-type crabs living in rock pools at the summit. He counted around six or seven in one of the larger pools. They were around the size of a 50 pence coin and translucent with a muddy tinge, and had a bit of patterning on their shells. How on earth did these crabs get there? Any birds dropping them from the sky would have had to carry them for hundreds of miles from the coast – and what do the crabs feed on? The pools at the summit of Uluru were barren apart from tiny amounts of greenish algae visible in some of the pools. Has anyone else seen them and does anyone know how long they have been there? Is the species unique to Uluru?

Nicola Clarke
Broadmayne, Dorset

The year without a summer

Your news item on the alignment of planets [FT124:17] has an error: the "year without a summer" was not 1812 but 1816, when crops failed, food prices multiplied, and there were world-wide famines exacerbated by a "strange summer monsoon" across India and the Far East. These events are all blamed on the April 1815 volcanic eruption of Tambora in the East Indies: dust in the stratosphere spread into a world-wide veil, reducing the penetration of sunlight, cooling the Earth, and distorting global wind circulation patterns. These events also inspired Mary Shelley to write *Frankenstein*. In 1812 there were volcanic eruptions on St Vincent in the West Indies and Awu in the Celebes (now Sulawesi). There seems to have been a lot of it about.

[Source: *Climate, History and the Modern World* by Prof H H Lamb].
Ken Lake
Loughton, Essex



Foot action

I have the rare ability of rotating my legs until my feet are pointing in the opposite direction. There is no trickery involved and I have not been in any accident, nor had any form of surgery. I have appeared in many US TV programmes.

Moses C Lanham, Jr
Monroe, Michigan

The Belgrave Hall ghost-image

As a long-standing member of ASSAP and one of its listed advisors, I was very interested to read your report of the Belgrave Hall Vigil carried out by a number of its members [FT122:12-13, 123:22-23].

On 9 February 1999, I was asked – as Chairman of the Spontaneous Cases Committee of the Society for Psychical Research – to scrutinise the security tape which is now the subject of so much controversy. I visited Belgrave Hall, and with the assistance of the curator and staff, made a thorough examination of the circumstances that led to the image effects that appeared on this tape.

My report differs substantially from the conclusions drawn by the ASSAP team. The latter makes no mention of the digital timing malfunction at the time of the appearance of the image, neither does it take into account the steady and once interrupted movement of the 'mist' across the field of view, at the same time retaining its basic shape. All this happened in a reported 7-knot wind. My opinion is that their evaporation theory regarding the mist is faulty, as there is no evidence of the mist descending, rather the very opposite.

My basic report (with some clarification for readers) follows:

"The 'image' does not appear to be explicable in terms relating to a purely physical presence. The direct reflection of the security light from a bird, insect, flying plastic bag, leaves, smoke etc, does not in my opinion provide a logical explanation, as any of these objects would have entailed a movement in or out of the one-second delay frame. (The image instantly appears and disappears within a five-second interval and remains perfectly still.) At the time this happens, the digital time display stops for five seconds. There is no evidence for the suggestion that the image is any type of electro-magnetic force, such as sheet or ball lightning. It does not resemble any definite or identifiable object. Any speculation that it is a ghost, as understood in the popular sense, I would class as subject to personal interpretation.

This image is accompanied by a mist, approximately kidney-shaped, appearing from the top right-hand corner of the frame. This drifts slowly to the left (alongside the top of the wall), stops for a few seconds, and then moves upwards, still retaining its basic shape for 35 seconds before disappearing. That such a mist appeared and retained its shape for that period of time, considering the 7-knot wind and light rain at the time, is difficult to explain in purely physical terms.

The mist phenomenon, in many configurations, has been recorded many times on camera, but to my knowledge this is the first time it has been clearly identified on a video recording accompanied by another inexplicable image, plus an apparent camera malfunction.

Conclusion:

Based on my experience in examining spontaneous psychic phenomena, I am of the opinion that unless it can be definitely proved otherwise, the combination of the image, the mist and the time delay can be said to show that the security camera captured a manifestation of psychic activity. Whether this activity is in any way connected to the history of the house or grounds, and the reported haunting, must for the time being be regarded as conjecture."

Maurice Gross
Council member,
Society for Psychical Research,
Muswell Hill, London

Regarding the Belgrave Hall Enigma: when I taped the footage of the security camera footage and played it a few times, it became apparent that the "mist" that was seen to the right of the screen was in fact a common-or-garden spider moving close to the camera. The spider's legs can be made out moving as it traverses the web.

Jed Francis
Looe, Cornwall

I was interested in your report on the possibility that spooks had been caught on a security camera. A few years ago, I was a member of a student parapsychology group during my PhD days at York University, and we invited a few psychics and clairvoyants as guest speakers. One of the speakers said that she had been told a story by a security guard in York that, one night, he and his colleagues had witnessed a male figure (in Edwardian dress if I recall correctly) moving about in the hallway of their company, which was based in a converted Victorian (?) mansion. They went to check, but found no-one. Returning to their control booth, they still saw the same figure in the same place on the screen!

One of the men went off to check, while his colleague stayed watching the monitor. The latter was amazed to see his colleague moving around the area the figure was occupying and even walking through it! He saw no-one – even though the figure was seen on the screen at all times.

The company decreed that no-one should mention this to outsiders in case the press and tourist hordes descended on them – but, as often happens, word got out.

Dr Paul Lee
Surbiton, Kent

Nessie on land

I'd like to correct some inaccuracies in your report on Nessie sightings [FT123:21]. It is stated that the Spicer land sighting of 1933 was of an animal 25-30ft (8-9m) in length. However, the witnesses themselves exaggerated the size of their Nessie each time they told the story. In their original report (*Inverness Courier*, 4 August 1933) they estimated the length at "six feet to eight feet" (1.8-2.4m), slightly smaller than your common dinosaur.

Also, it was not the Spicers who called their otter – or monster, if you are a cryptozoologist – "a gigantic stomach with a writhing gut attached"; these were the words of Mr Jenkins about his own sighting of Nessie, this time in the water, 40 years later on 30 September 1974. This confusion might have arisen because both reports are mentioned on the same page in the Bords' *Alien Animals*.

Furthermore, the last land sighting of Nessie was not in June 1963. Actually, unknown even to most Nessie fans, there were six land sightings between 1960 and 1975: 28 February 1960 by T MacLeod; 1962 by Ted Holiday (traces only); then the 6 June 1963 film by LNPIB mentioned in your piece.

Hardly known is a report from August 1962, which was only reported in a letter by Arthur Copit from Middletown, Connecticut, to the *New York Times Magazine* (1 August 1976, p.55c), and which I find so interesting that I quote it in full:

"One night in August 1962, I was in the vicinity of Urquhart Castle, on the shore of Loch Ness. I had no idea at the time that this area was the site of the most frequent Loch Ness 'monster' sightings. It was perhaps 11, and there was a full moon shining toward us across the loch. When I parked my car outside the castle gate at least 100 yards from the loch [hard to imagine where exactly this should be], I was able to hear a very loud sound.

"I did not have to strain to make the noise out; indeed, I and the girl I was with, heard it as soon as we left our car. And as we approached the castle, it quickly became clear that the sound was emanating from a spot beyond the castle – that is to say, the water. It was a halting sort of sound; uneven breath; a kind of gasping. It made me think of an asthmatic walrus (not that I have ever met one), or some such amphibious creature that could breathe on land but with effort only. A large creature, surely, to expel such a volume of air. The thing was obviously eating a lot. Munch munch munch. Snap snap snap.

"By the time we reached the castle we had no doubt about what was happening: a large amphibious crea-

ture of some sort was feeding on a bush or tree. At the castle (as I recall) the ground rose so that one could walk from the grass or dirt directly onto the parapet. As we walked up said parapet we realised (she, apparently, to her delight; I to my consternation) that 'the thing' was directly beyond the parapet, on a small beach or spit of land. It did not sound like a cow or sheep or dog; it sounded like an aquatic/land creature. Also, the loch is extremely cold; nothing sensible (like dogs or cows) would swim in it by choice. From where I stood, I could see there was no apparent way for a land creature to walk around the castle and get to this spot; it was guarded from land approach by the castle walls.

"Well, all I had to do was poke my head over the ledge beside the parapet and I would have seen what it was. However, it occurred to me that whatever it was would also see what I was. Perhaps Nessie was a predator. 'You go first', I whispered to the girl



I was with, and she pointed to me. Whereupon I devised a plan: to find a large rock, drop it over the side and (no, not knock it out) drive the creature toward the water, whereupon we would be able to glimpse the thing in retreat. Safely. However, I made a bit more noise than necessary and the creature departed into the water.

The girl I was with claimed she saw a long tubular creature slide into the water. That is her report. I did not see it. I believe I saw a V-shaped wake in the water by the edge of the beach, but then I may have wanted to see the wake and will not swear I truly saw the wake, as I swear to everything else I report. Subsequent to this event, it has seemed to me that I came upon, by accident, a favourite feeding spot of 'the creature'. Possibly my information may help you in obtaining clear photographs and irrefutable evidence of the thing's existence. I hope you will not take my slightly jocular tone as a sign of a hoax. I really have better things to do than make up this tale..."

After 1963, there were two further land sightings: in October 1975, R Lipinski saw Nessie on a sandbank off Fort Augustus (see Nessletter 11), and one allegedly happened a few years previously according to a letter published on November 11, 1975, p. 7c, in the *Inverness Courier*.

"Lepinski's account of the sandbank stranding was most interesting. Some years ago, before returning to Scotland, I was checking essays of matriculation students in England. One of the subjects was 'an exceptional holiday'. A teenager, from the middle of Lancashire (I was afterwards able to find out), wrote a vivid account of a personal experience in the same area; so vivid I discounted it both on its 'imaginative perception', and on the fact that most sightings were in the Lewis-ton-Dores-Foyers triangle.

The writer mentioned how in the middle of the night the two boys were awakened by a terrific commotion outside their tent, near the abbey at Fort Augustus, on the loch side, and the drenching sound which fell upon their ears. They did not move until daylight when they found their motorcycle knocked over, their tent nearly awash and the shrubbery hard by beaten down and broken. It was quite evident from their experience that the monster had indeed paid a visit. (L B Croston.)"

I'd say that in contrast to these fanciful tales, the 1999 land sighting pales; actually, it rather sounds as if somebody simply paraphrased the exaggerated versions of the Spicers' experience as it can be found in practically all Nessie books and submitted it anonymously to the media.

Finally, to end this orgy of pedantry (but you know how easy simple mistakes become facts once they've been quoted often enough) no Indian tradition ever told of a monster called "chaousarou" in America's Lake Champlain [FT123:43]. The word is French and refers to a 5ft (1.5m) fish Samuel de Champlain noticed in the lake in 1609. Again, like the Spicers' report, this innocent little note was blown out of proportion by proponents of a monster in Lake Champlain to establish a tradition there. I refer you to Michel Meurger's excellent *Lake Monster Traditions* which exposes this hype.

Ulrich Magin
Rastatt, Germany

Roswell correction

Sub-editing created an error in my article, "Handwriting of the Gods" [FT124:45]. Jesse Marcel Jr is not the son of the owner of the ranch where the debris was picked up. Jesse Marcel Sr was the intelligence officer of the 509th Bomber Wing at Roswell Army Airbase, who was assigned to go out to the debris field. He brought the pieces home in the middle of the night for his son and wife to examine. The foreman of the Foster ranch (the name of the place at the time) where the debris was found was called Mac Brazel.

Greg Bishop
exclmid@primenet.com

Another prices light

In response to Richard Starzecki's letter [FT121:51], the phenomenon of the price-ticket afflicted lamp post in Loudwater is not alone. In Greenwich Park, overlooking the footpath around Flamsteed House, the old Royal Greenwich Observatory, there is a tree which has been covered with old chewing-gum deposits. As in the case of the lamp post, the surrounding trees have been left alone. Potential gum-discarders have to walk a reasonable distance from any gum-selling shops, as the tree is pretty central within the Park – a distance of around half a mile (750m) from the exits. Are there any more examples of such ritual "sticking" behaviour anywhere else?

Jim Cheetham
Greenwich, London

A Moroccan writes...

It gives me pleasure to write you this letter in order to thank you for your efforts to inform your readers deeply, and also to demand you publish the following in your readers' page: A Moroccan writer and researcher want to know a lot about paranormal phenomena, UFOs, spiritual miracles and hard-to-get information. Please send your articles, books and periodicals to the following address:

Mr Errezaki el Hassan
Douar Tarna Aday, Anzi
85100, Tiznit, Morocco

An old trick

The Hierophant mentions "an entirely new scam", viz billing relatives of the deceased for unordered books [FT123:61]. Far from being new, this was the *modus operandi* of the Depression era con artists played by Ryan and Tatum O'Neal in the 1973 film *Paper Moon*. In this case, though, the volume in question was the Bible.

Tom Ruffles
King's Lynn, Norfolk

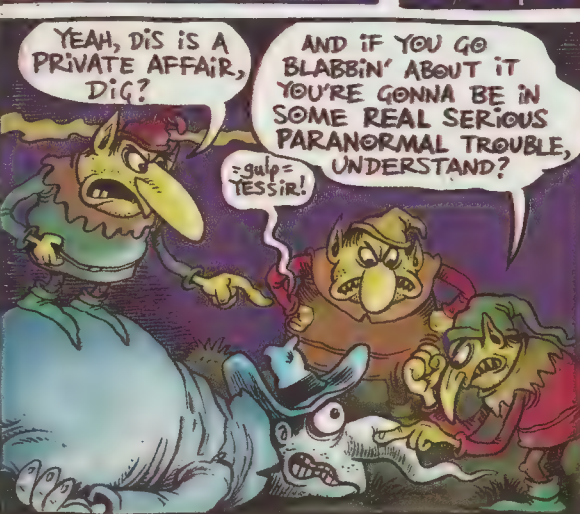
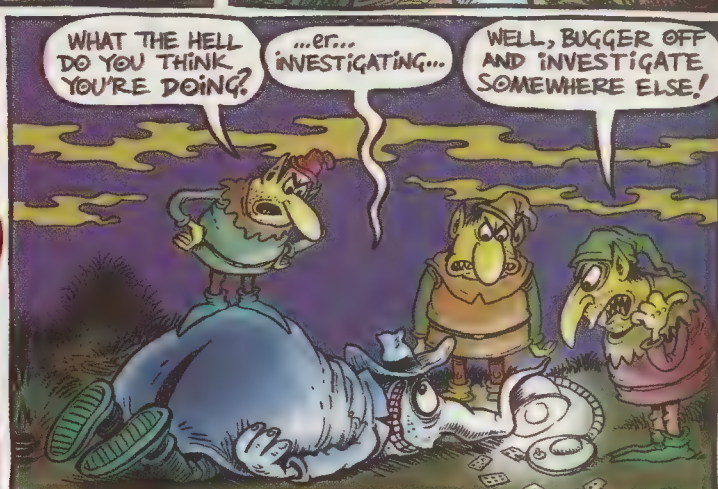
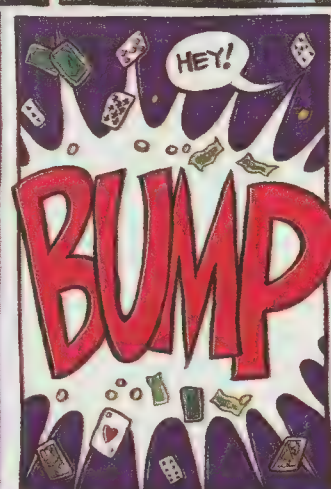
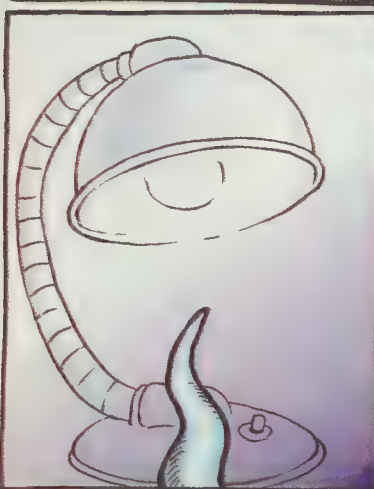
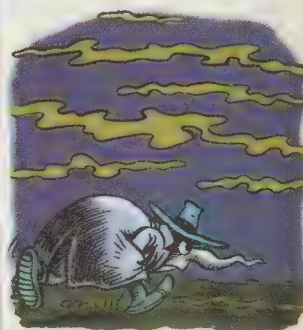
PHENOMENOMIX

HUNT EMERSON

A MISTY NIGHT ON A DESOLATE MARSH... STRANGE, EERIE MARSH LIGHTS HAVE CAST FEAR AND WONDER OVER THE MINDS OF COUNTRY FOLK FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS!

THE MUNDANE, "SCIENTIFIC" EXPLANATION IS THAT THEY ARE CAUSED BY BUBBLES OF PHOSPHORESCENT NATURAL GAS...

LET'S LOOK CLOSER AND INVESTIGATE...



reviews

Our view of the latest books, periodicals, exhibitions, movies and games

Book of the Month

Simply animal attraction

Accessible research revealing the complex diversity of animal sexual behaviour

Biological Exuberance: Animal homosexuality and natural diversity

BRUCE BAGEMIHL

Profile Books, London, 1999, hb, £25.00, pp752, index, bib, notes, illus, photos. ISBN 1-8619-7182-6.

Gay and lesbian behaviour is completely natural. In the first ever work of its kind, biologist Dr Bruce Bagemihl has succeeded in documenting an unbelievable diversity of sexual practices and strategies in almost 300 species in all. The volume is attractive, scholarly and superbly well-illustrated. Technical references and notes augment the text, citing source material for professionals, but the volume is also written for a popular audience.

Technical studies have recorded homosexuality in many animals, from gay pairs of vultures and lesbian magpies to roving all-male 'clubs' of mallards and elephants that become aroused during 'erotic combat'. Same-sex sexual behaviour is ubiquitous within the animal kingdom, and far from an anomaly restricted to *Homo sapiens*. But while animal homosexuality is well documented (and documented in many cases by the foremost experts on the species in question) and widespread – in some species more frequently observed than heterosexual behaviour – it has been scarcely discussed and even omitted from the literature.

In what amounts to a conspiracy of silence, biologists have suppressed, ignored and explained away animal homosexuality. Describing homosexual interactions as inept, dysfunctional and even perverse – in one case even attributing gay pairing in butterflies to a decline in their moral standards – biologists have in recent years been accused of being homophobic: exhibiting a lack of objectivity that is at odds with scientific principles.

Bagemihl deals with far more than homosexuality. Oral and anal intercourse, masturbation with tools and female orgasm have proved widespread among mammals. Bagemihl documents cases of gyandromorphy (animals which are female on one side and male on the other) as well as numerous instances of transgender – animals combining male and female traits.

Transvestism is exhibited by some female bears, and is the norm for Spotted hyaenas. Females in these cases possess a false 'penis' through which they copulate and give birth (resulting in much infant and first-time mother mortality). Gender-bending strategies are also described for Bighorn and Dall's sheep, species in which homosexual behaviour is so routine that they can be described as living in homosexual societies. Ironically, some females in these species exhibit transvestitism, thereby arousing the attentions of homosexual males, while some males morphologically mimic females and thereby avoid the sexual intentions of their male counterparts!

One question I could not help but find myself asking while reading this book was WHY? Why is homosexuality so pervasive and universal? At times I felt almost guilty pondering this question – after all, we hardly ever seek biological explanations for heterosexuality. At the same time, the scientific demand for investigation of the function of homosexuality has resulted, not just in abundant spurious and absurd 'explanations', but in cruel and often heterosexually-biased experimentation often recalling the methods used to 'cure' homosexual people such as lobotomisation, electroshock, the insertion of electrodes and deafening (to see what effect vocalisation had on homosexual encounters). Homosexual animals have also been prone to post-mortem investigation based on the assumption that their behaviour must be pathological.

Assuming that reproduction is a primary 'function' of life, it becomes

tempting to explain homosexuality as an augmentation of heterosexuality. In some species (some swans, for example), gay pairs raise a higher percentage of their adopted chicks because they are better at defending them.

Same-sex pairs also appeal to members of the opposite sex and, it has been suggested, function as a special way of luring in heterosexual attention (an idea that very few homosexual humans would find agreeable). While such 'benefits' may sometimes result from the formation of homosexual pairs, the reproductive costs usually exceed them. Lesbian birds that share a nest are more likely to attract predators and often exhibit confused brooding behaviour while lesbian primates are often aggressive to their consort's offspring and do not assist in their care.

Reproduction also cannot be the sole function of sexual activity given that sex during pregnancy, masturbation, and sex simply for pleasure are rife. Bagemihl argues that the astounding extravagance and complexity of sexual strategies both augment diversity, itself a stabilising 'aim' of natural systems, while also serving to help expend the overabundance of energy which all organisms are given by way of simple biochemistry.

This is heretical stuff and it has profound affects on how we see the world around us.

DARREN NAISH

See page 32 for special reader offer

FORTEAN RATING

An important wake-up call for biologists.



RECOMMENDED READING

KEY BOOKS ON THIS SUBJECT

Biological Anomalies: Mammals

William R Corliss (1996)

The Evolution of Sex and its Consequences

S C Stearns (1999)

Minds of Their Own: Thinking and Awareness in Animals

Lesley J Rogers (1998)

Featuring



Bright Colours, Falsely Seen page 56



Games Oucast page 58

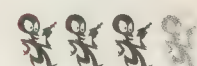


Movies The Blair Witch Project page 58

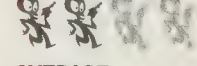
RATING SYSTEM



EXCELLENT



GOOD



AVERAGE



POOR



EXECRABLE



EACH MONTH FT
REVISITS AN OUT-OF-
PRINT BUT STILL
IMPORTANT CLASSIC

FORTEAN BOOKSHELF

LEARNED PIGS & FIREPROOF WOMEN RICKY JAY

1987. Robert Hale,
London. pp343, index,
plates, illus.
ISBN 0-7090-3150-5

Ricky Jay holds a Guinness record for being able to throw playing cards further than anyone else. As one of the world's greatest sleight-of-hand artists, he has performed in numerous TV shows and movies. On one such occasion for BBC TV, he gave a learned lecture on the cups-and-ball trick, which he traced back to Mesopotamian temple rituals. This reveals the other side of the showman: he is passionate about every aspect of 'stage magic' – the characters, routines, flourishes, etc. Here, Jay presents 17 accomplished portraits of classic artists and a history of their genre: from memory feats, writing with all four limbs, armless wonders, the fire-proof, the balancers, the swallowers and (of course) the farters and various animal acts... beautifully illustrated from his own priceless collection of antique books and ephemera. This is essential reading for fortune tellers, or anyone interested in the manipulation of what people see, think and do. Fortunately, it was reissued in 1998 as a paperback (Noonday Press, USA).

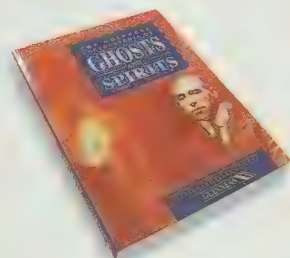
Bob Rickard

If you would like to submit a classic book review in under 200 words, follow this format and send it to the editorial address or email it to: ft@johnbrown.co.uk (subject: 'classic bookshelf').

The Guinness Encyclopaedia of Ghosts and Spirits

ROSEMARY ELLEN GUILLEY

Guinness, London, 1997
£11.99, pp 374, index, illus.
ISBN: 0-8511-2748-7



Guile y's encyclopædia, originally published in America in 1992, will prove indispensable to anyone with more than a passing interest in the incorporeal world.

Its range is broad, covering modern cases like the Enfield Poltergeist and the curse of "Little Bastard" – James Dean's 1955 Porsche Spyder, pieces of which continued to wreak havoc long after it had been scrapped for parts – as well as the 19th century heydays of Spiritualism, physical mediumship and psychical research.

Folkloric and religious motifs, practices and entities from Western and Eastern cultures also get a look in, many in some detail.

Druid Shaman Priest Metaphors of Celtic Paganism

LESLIE ELLEN JONES

Hisarlik Press, 4 Catisfield Road, Enfield Lock, Middlesex, EN3 6BD
1998, hb, £25.00, pp229, index, bib
ISBN: 1-8743-1227-3

Erudite fortean and folklorist Leslie Ellen Jones has been brave enough to attack the mighty midden-heap of neopagan Celtic and Druidic assumption, a feat which may horrify the coffee-table celtophiles out there.

Asking 'who were the Celts and what were they up to?', Jones threads her way through the linguistics and archaeology of the Celtic countries, before tackling the apparent and dubious duality of Saints vs Druids, and the

SHE HAS LEFT A HOLE FOR OTHERS TO PEER THROUGH

Biographies of key characters – some quite obscure, like that intrepid explorer of the female nether regions and master of "mediumistic teleplastics" Baron Schrenck-Notzing – and further reading guidelines for most entries make this equally useful to the casual or more serious reader.

The entries are well-balanced, and though Guile y is clearly sympathetic to the mediums' cause, she's quick to point out fraud when the truth can't be avoided. My only real gripes are the occasional lack of cross-referencing, and the lack of material on contemporary psi research. Overall this is an excellent book that comes highly recommended – you'll never need to give up the ghost with this comprehensive survey.

MARK PILKINGTON

FORTEAN RATING

Comprehensive and indispensable for the casual or serious reader



UFO Revelation TIM MATTHEWS

Blandford, pb, £9.99, pp256,
index, bib, illus.
ISBN: 0-7137-2733-0

The only characteristics UFOs have in common are that they are flying and that they are unidentified.

Any attempt to unify the whole range of unidentified aerial phenomena under a single theory smacks of over-inclusive thinking. To find yet another text purporting to offer a single rational explanation for every sighting back to Kenneth Arnold is, frankly, a bore and a disappointment.

The difficulty one inevitably has with the suggestion that every single unexplained sighting in the sky is or has been the test of a secret military prototype is that one must then suppose that all of the 19th century airship flaps were as a result of covert testing by the Victorian forebears of the Lockheed skunk



works. One must then allow that the 16th century flying crosses and shining discs might well have been a prototype for a secret weapon to be used by the King of Spain as air cover for his Armada. Okay, the phrase "many UFO reports" has been weaseled in here and there, but blink and you miss it; it's certainly against the general tenor of the rest of the text.

One of the more depressing features of the current ufological literature is that it is written for an audience familiar with the background material, as though part of a scholarly discourse, but generally lacks the rigour of proper scholarship. Matthews' sources run to some 10 pages of bibliography, listing no more than eight declassified USAF documents regarding flying saucers. One might think this a little light considering the purported task at hand.

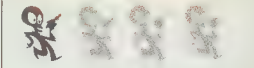
Matthews' tendentious, hectoring, boorish style makes the book very hard to stand for more than a short sitting at any one time, spending too much space on the saucerheads' favourite pastime (sneering at other saucerheads) and too little dealing with the evidence that goes to the nub of his thesis. If he wanted to tell us all about the secret aircraft, he needs to have done a lot more work in the declassified stuff.

Or, in the case of RAF Warton, a lot more time drinking in the right pubs. Those engineers are shockingly indiscreet...

ANDREW DENNIS

FORTEAN RATING

No secrets here – for complete saucerheads only



many of whom hijacked druidism for nationalist reasons, or attempted to fit their history of the Celts into the Christian masterplan of Creationism. In the closing chapter, she explores 'Druids in a postmodern world', through movies such as *The Wicker Man*, *Excalibur* and *Into the West*.

The author's modest and subtle humour prevails throughout this volume. Her statement to have 'only begun to scratch the surface of Druidic representation' may be true, but at least she has left a hole for others to peer through.

Essential reading for anyone interested in Celtic mythology, Druidism or paganism.

DAVE WALSH

FORTEAN RATING

Essential reading – an erudite look at Druidic representation



Bright Colors Falsely Seen Synesthesia and the Search for Transcendental Knowledge

KEVIN T DANN

Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1998, hb, £20, pp225, index, bib, notes. ISBN: 0-3000-6619-8

Of all the anomalies of perception, synaesthesia is perhaps the least understood and most misrepresented (see *FT* 193). Dann's intellectual history traces the fascination for this obscure psychological phenomenon through its myriad twists and turns, leading us through the bogus history bestowed upon synaesthesia by the 19th century occultists, the artistic jiggery-pokery of Kandinsky, Scriabin and other would-be synaesthetes, its proscription as a form of mental decay by psychologists such as Havelock Ellis, and, most recently, its bit parts

in the transcendental musings of a handful of psychedelic and New Age thinkers.

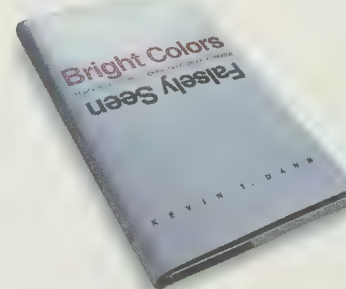
In debunking the much-peddled notion of synaesthesia as a kind of primal language shared by seers, primitives and children, Dann draws on experimental studies which have shed considerable light on its highly idiosyncratic and potentially complex machinations. But the emotional dimension of synaesthesia is best

realised in his focus on the prose and poetry of Vladimir Nabokov, a genuine synaesthete, whose writings are filled with evocations and analysis of his own prodigious 'gift'.

We discover how Nabokov's photographic recall was greatly enhanced by his synaesthesia, allowing him to repeatedly raid his storehouse of personal memory, to recycle his life in a fiction that is steeped in remarkably acute and voluptuous self-observation.

This is an elegant, insightful and at times brilliant history of a phenomenon that has been too long hostage to a clutch of -isms and -osophies.

ANTONIO MELECHI



FORTEAN RATING

Sheds much-needed light (and) sound on this subject



The Conspiracy Reader

EDS. AL HIDEELL AND
JOAN D'ARC

Citadel Press, Secaucus NJ.
1999 pb, pp 354, index, refs
ISBN: 0-8065-2041-8



The anonymous editors of this compilation, excerpted from *Paranoia* magazine, remind us of Hillary Clinton's 1997 complaint that she and Bill were victims of a huge "right-wing conspiracy", aided and abetted by the mainstream press. Their chief assailant was Ambrose Evans Pritchard, self-confessed friend of MI6 and contributor to that New World Order bastion, the *Sunday Telegraph*. Along, it should be noted, with our own editor, Paul Sieveking.

For many of the book's contributors, this connection alone would be enough to include *FT* in the conspiracy. This is a recurring problem with conspiracy-thinking in general, in which epic claims are balanced precariously above a flimsy tangle of facts (often individually true) and connections. But whether conspiracies are "true" or not is not necessarily the point, it's that people believe them

that matters. To their credit, *Paranoia*'s editors are aware of this, and occasionally have fun with their speculation – a vengeful Paul McCartney ordering John Lennon's death, for example.

Besides the usual parade of suspects there's some good, obscure dark matter here, as well as a generous smattering of crackpotology (or to use the technical term, psychoceramics). Overall, an enjoyable, if gentle, cruise through these murky backwaters, though frustratingly only a handful of articles are properly referenced.

MARK PILKINGTON

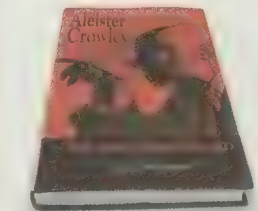
FORTEAN RATING

A good sampler but keep your wits about you



Aleister Crowley: The Beast Demystified ROGER HUTCHINSON

Mainstream, Edinburgh. 1998,
hb, £16.99, pp216, index.
ISBN: 1-8515-8967-8



It takes a (mercifully) rare skill to make a biography of such a colourful and controversial figure as

Aleister Crowley dull, but Roger Hutchinson possesses it. In "demystifying" the Beast, he skips over as much as possible of Crowley's esoteric beliefs and practices, and when he absolutely can't avoid referring to them, treats them with an off-handed superficiality.

The book has numerous errors and omissions, from the trivial to the major, far too many to mention here. Someone writing about religion, mainstream or esoteric, really ought to do their homework. For example, he assumes that Crowley coined the famous phrase "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law", when a moment's research would have taken it back to its original source – Francois Rabelais, some 400 years earlier. Even Crowley's Abbey of Thelema comes from Rabelais' Abbey of Theleme.

As a serious work of biography this book fails on just about every count. There are no footnotes or endnotes, no sources, no bibliography; there is a skimpy "Index of Personalities", a mere two pages long. There is a host of excellent illustrative material available for such a book; the only illustrations in this are on the front and back of the jacket.

DAVID V BARRETT

FORTEAN RATING

Sadly uninspired and uninspiring



Daily Mail 1001 Answers to Correspondents ANDY SIMPSON & JAMES BLACK

Robinson Publishing, 1998, pb
£6.99, index. pages unnumbered.
ISBN: 1-8548-7579-5

The title says it all. Some of the questions are endearingly odd (If ghosts can supposedly slide through walls and doors, why don't they fall through floors? Is there any truth in the belief that people or animals can fall under the influence of the Moon?), some just odd (Did Noah include woodworm on his passenger list?).

Unfortunately, some answers leave you no wiser than you were before (the man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo was either Charles de Ville Wells, who died skint, or Joseph Hobson Jagger, who held onto his loot), but that is almost incidental.

The highlight is the deliriously tacky wartime parody of Lewis Carroll's nonsensical *Jabberwocky* ("Twas Danzig and the Swastikoves/Did heil and hittle in the reich").

A parson's egg of a book, but one that makes for good loo reading.

VAL STEVENSON

FORTEAN RATING

Uneven in quality but entertaining



YOU REVIEW



OLIVER SCHWARTZ

FAMILIAR SPIRITS COLIN WATERS

Robert Hale, London.
1993, hb £14.99,
pp174, bib, illus. ISBN
0-7090-5229-4

Sceptics will never again be able to say there are no cases of naked ghosts for here is a real mishmash of monsters and masturbators, rapists and seducers.

Obviously offered as light relief from the current trend of pseudo-scientific studies of the paranormal, this collection of 45 "genuine" (?) reports provides questionable details of such phenomena as 'The Urinating Goblin', 'The Ghost of the Sex-crazed Cat', 'The Ghosts that Broke Wind' and the Lancashire enigma, 'The Skulls that had Sex'. The author just had to include 'The Phantom Groper of Borley Rectory', who sexually molested visitors sleeping in one particular bedroom. He also tries to identify the 'unseen' phantom who became known, for some obscure reason, as 'Marie the Milkmaid'. The author is a teacher of history in North Yorkshire who also tutors "other subjects to adult students". One cannot help but wonder what his syllabus includes.

Andrew Green

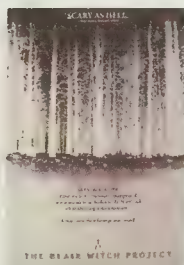
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MOVIE

The Blair Witch Project

1999. Dir Daniel Myrick & Eduardo Sánchez. Stars: Heather Donahue, Michael C Williams, Joshua Leonard. 82 mins



This bleak, sleek and extremely unsettling little movie has been giving the summer's lumbering fx-laden, would-be blockbusters the fear, and they have every reason to be afraid. Made on the proverbial shoestring by two film students, and largely improvised by its three frighteningly believable actors (all unknowns), it's a triumphant return to the days when horror films were still genuinely scary. Taking the time-honoured film-within-a-film premise, it follows the ill-fated exploits of a trio of young documentary makers as they seek out the legendary witch said to lurk deep in the Blair woods. As you might expect, they find a lot more than they bargained for. Combining the unseen terrors of Algeron Blackwood with the raw shaky-camera-running-through-the-woods terror of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Blair Witch* is sure to revitalise a genre that was in serious danger of losing itself in the woods forever. **BÉBÉ MUNCH**

GAME



Outcast

1999. Appeal/Infogrames (www.infogrames.com), RRP £40.00, 2 CDs. Platform: PC

Games from French studios are often regarded as slightly odd. But French designers, bless them, are not daunted by experimenting with new types of game; an approach which gave us such memorable series as *Fade to Black*, *Alone in the Dark*, and *Little Big Adventure*. *Outcast* has inherited all that is best in this tradition.

Two long and dramatic computer-animated movies transport you from an Earth facing destruction by a mysterious 'Philadelphia Experiment-like' vortex to Adelpha in another dimension. You have to save both worlds by locating your scattered equipment, lost

team members and sacred artifacts of the locals. To do this you have to explore six vast, alien landscapes, interacting with characters (who are definitely not human), many of them hostile or agents of the chief baddie. The worlds themselves look and feel suitably alien and the characters have brilliant AI (to the extent that they seem more like actors than sprites).

The gameplay is non-linear – you undertake the missions in any order you like – and is designed for and delivers total immersion. Rather like reading a fat SF novel, *Outcast* takes a while to get going; it is a credible alternate world, with lots of complex character, plot and background to absorb, and so requires concentration and a fair chunk of time. Thus, it will not suit everyone, but will hugely gratify anyone who wants to live a vicarious and adventurous life on another world for at least a week's playing time.

It's fairly demanding on space and memory, and a P2 with 64mb RAM is recommended. Because of its complex nature, some computers might hit setup problems, but

patches and help are available from www.outcastcentral.com. **BOB RICKARD**

FORTEAN RATING

A fascinating and engrossing adventure game for the serious gamer



MOVIE



Star Wars, Episode 1: The Phantom Menace

1999. Dir George Lucas. Stars: Liam Neeson, Ewan McGregor, Natalie Portman. 136 mins. Cert PG

Well, the movie everyone has been waiting for has finally arrived, swept along on a tidal wave of hype and merchandising. But is it really worth the anticipation? Happily, the answer is an almost unequivocal yes as Lucas takes us back into a familiar world but with an unfamiliar perspective. Jar Jar Binks is every bit as bad as you'd feared although children seem to love him. Frustratingly, he and his race are high on unintelligible.

Even for the most hardened *Star Wars* fan the complexities of the plot and back story can be hard going but it does clarify a lot of the later history of Parts IV–VI.

Don't go for the spectacular effects, the breathtaking fight sequences or the actors. Simply step into a galaxy far, far away and just let it sweep you in.

JANE WATKINS

FORTEAN RATING

Ignore the hype and brave the queues. Quite simply breathtaking.



PREMIERE

PERVERSIONS OF SCIENCE

From the executive producers of *Tales from the Crypt* comes a unique, totally outrageous collection of half-hour tales. Based on a successful line of comic books, this twisted new series airs on Sci-Fi at 9.30pm every Friday.

PERVERSIONS OF SCIENCE explores the dark corners of science fiction and boasts mind-altering plot twists, phenomenal special effects and over-the-top characterisations. Each edition twists the wonders of science into distorted, sexy and shocking scenarios.

The first 10 episodes boast some of Hollywood's top acting and production talent. Even the list of Executive Producers reads like a Who's Who in Hollywood: Richard Donner, David Giler, Walter Hill, Joel Silver and Robert Zemeckis. Featured directors include Walter Hill, Tobe Hooper, Russell Mulcahy and William Shatner.

September begins with two new episodes: 'Ultimate Weapon' (3 September) which

features an alien arriving on Earth with orders to procreate and who must morph into various human mating forms to achieve this objective – with unexpected results.

'Dream of Doom' (10 September) stars Keith Carradine as a teacher who finds himself unable to tell the difference between waking reality and dreams after taking experimental drugs to increase his level of REM sleep. Desperate to break the nightmarish cycle, the man decides to take drastic measures – but ends up being held prisoner in yet another dream world.

William Shatner directs and stars in 'Boxed In' (17 September) which tells the story of a space traveller who has a last fling with his longtime 'sex-droid' before returning home to his girlfriend. Unfortunately, a malfunction gets him caught in a very compromising position – just as his girlfriend and her father arrive for dinner. From time travel journeys to voyages into separate realities, narcissistic superwomen to Martians in disguise, the series is filled with depravity, dementia and doom – all in the name of fun!



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MAGWATCH

Curiosity Killed the Cat Animals & Men #19



Might a Kent zoo maintained by a wealthy eccentric family between 1900 and 1959 be largely responsible for many of the alien big cat (ABC) and out-of-place-animal (OOPA) sightings that have plagued the area ever since? Cobtree Manor, situated between the legendary Blue Bell Hill and Aylesford, was the location of a large menagerie and public zoo owned by Sir Garrad Tyrwhitt-Drake. Over the years his collection included one or more creatures for virtually every letter of the alphabet, including baboons, camels, gnu, mysterious-sounding "special" sheep, yak, and several types of big cat. Rumours also abound of strange cross-breeding experiments carried out in the manor's basements, but these remain sadly unsubstantiated. 80-year-old Leonard Cuckard, who has lived in the area all his life, remembers

regular big cat escapes in the 1930s and 1940s. On one occasion in the 1930s, unfortunately undated, the Royal Engineers were called in and shot a black "leopard" on the Downs at Burham, near Blue Bell Hill. Drake admitted it was an escapee from his notoriously poorly-secured zoo.

4 issues: £8 UK, £9 EC, £14 US, £15 R.O.W.
From: Jonathan Downes, CFZ, 15 Holne Court, Exwick, Exeter, Devon, EX4 2NA, UK
<http://www.eclipse.co.uk/cfz>

Plots Against the World
Steven Woodbridge
Magonia #67, June 1999



New World Order-style conspiracy theories, as disseminated by the likes of David Icke, Jim Keith and NEXUS magazine, are a contemporary, technologically-advanced manifestation of right-wing thought that dates as far back as the French Revolution of 1789–92. The shadowy faces behind the nefarious global elite have remained the same – the Illuminati, Freemasons, and –

with the 1875 publication of *World Conquest by the Jews* and the notorious 1905 Russian forgery, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* – the Jews. Writing in the 1920s, British Fascist member Nesta Webster, whose works are still in print today, warned of the imminent disintegration of ordered society at the hands of a corrupt, global financial elite and their puppet governments. Convinced of an impending war between the forces of Darkness and Light, the BF trained street paramilitary groups to prepare for the coming conflagration, not unlike today's more rural American militias. *Plus ça change.*

4 issues: £5 UK, £6 Europe, \$13 USA.
From: John Rimmer, John Dee Cottage, 5 James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London SW14 8HB, UK
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A number of pamphlets and magazines provide readers with an essential psychosurrealist shelter from the earthbound forces of mundanity. Their very nature defies condensation into the format of this column, but for those who like their mind-expansion in paper form, be sure to turn your attentions to the following publications (please enclose an SAE for free publications or info):

* **Network News:** 4 issues: £5 (suggested donation) UK, £6.50 EU,

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EDITOR: BOB RICKARD
E-mail: rickard@forteanimes.com
Fax: 0181 552 5466

EDITOR: PAUL SIEVEKING
E-mail: sieeking@forteanimes.com
Fax: 0171 485 5002

ART DIRECTOR:
ETIENNE GILFILLAN
E-mail: etienne@johnbrown.co.uk

FORTAN STUDIES EDITOR:
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E-mail: steve@fortstudywin-uk.net

PUBLISHER: MIKE DASH
E-mail: miked@johnbrown.co.uk
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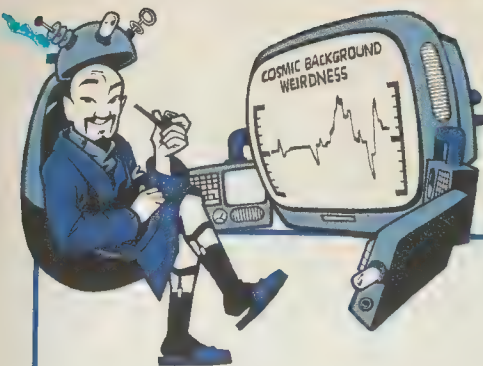
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Hierophant

In his fortress of arrogance, deep below the Himalayas, the
immortal Ascended Master known as the Hierophant travels the
more disreputable paths of forteana...

Neither Uri Geller not ufologist Tim
Matthews are strangers to these
pages; Mr Geller you will no doubt remem-
ber, while Mr Matthews – or Hepple as he
once preferred – last turned up amid
reports of fisticuffs at a BUFORA conference
early last year. The two are to combine
forces to produce a newsstand paranormal
magazine, which “will have a circulation of
about 12-15,000”. Matthews might wish
to be wary – Mr Geller's last involve-
ment with paranormal publish-
ing lasted less than 18 months
before the sorely-missed *Uri
Geller's Encounters* went to the
great publisher's clearing
house in the sky. Mr Matthews
has clearly attended the same
courses as Philip Mantle (FT122), as
his call for contributions mentions
that “contributors will be paid 60
days after publication” – which, given
the delay between submission and
publication, suggests that one
might expect to be paid as you read
this for work completed in June.

I hope Loren Coleman is
braced for a wave of com-
plaints about his recent *Crypto-
zoology A-Z*, if not prosecutions under the
Trades Descriptions Act. Despite its title,
recent communications from Loren suggest
that it's actually more of a “Cryptozoology
B-W”, running as it does from “Barloy, Jean-
Jacques” to “Wright, Bruce L.”

Attentive readers will know that films
can hide many things; *Three Men And
A Baby* is famously supposed to harbour a
ghost in one scene, while *The Wizard Of Oz*
is said to show the suicide of a Munchkin
actor in a forest sequence. Now it appears
that a more recent contender is getting in
on the act. “During the movie *Men In Black*,”
one kirk.stauss@teleweb.net advises me,
“there is a strange white dot that slowly

moves across the sky. This occurs during
the seen [sic] where the bug takes the doctor
from the morgue to the space ship that is
disguised as a water tower. This happens
before the bug climbs the ladder to the
ship. This is just one of the sightings.” Of
course, it hardly stretches the belief
envelope to imagine that the makers might



have placed bogus UFOs in the film for this
very reason...

One might reasonably expect that the
dusty world of Egyptology would be a
quieter area of enquiry than, say, the
hotbeds of ufology. A slightly narked Lynn
Picknett and Clive Prince have been in
touch with news which suggest otherwise;
it seems that online service providers AOL
have closed down the “Egyptnews” discus-
sion list run by Chris Ogilvie-Herald.

Although e-mails were distributed only
to subscribers, AOL has decided to stop the
list following a complaint from an unidenti-
fied source about “spamming”, or e-mailing
advertising material willy-nilly to all and

sundry, which came shortly after Picknett
and Prince mentioned their forthcoming *The
Stargate Conspiracy*. The pair also mention
that Robert Bauval (author of *The Orion
Mystery* and other books) had recently used
the list to strongly criticise both Mr Ogilvie-
Herald and the list itself...

As an immortal ascended being com-
posed of pure energy, the Hierophant
rarely finds himself at a loss to explain any-
thing. However, I have to admit defeat
when it comes to the “Andy Roberts Smokes
Dope” homepage, which at the time of
writing resides at [members.xoom.com/
truthseek/](http://members.xoom.com/truthseek/). I am given to understand
that it's something to do with an
escalating feud between some-
time FT contributor Roberts and
somebody called Matthew
Williams. I am, however, at a loss to
explain just why Mr Williams
believes anybody cares about Mr
Roberts' extra-curricular activities to
such a degree that they'll spend at
least two hours online downloading an
improbably vast MPEG video of him
supposedly indulging in a practise so
common and inoffensive that it can
safely be carried out in most London
parks these days.

An intriguing coincidence has been
pointed out by an American correspon-
dent – on 2 July 1947 a spacecraft contain-
ing aliens is believed by some to have
crashed in Roswell, New Mexico. American
Vice President Al Gore was born on 21 March
1948, just short of nine months later. Mere
happenstance, I am sure.

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Whatever happened to...

i In which we explore current developments in subjects of interest to FT readers, present the latest news about expeditions, or catch up with the most intriguing people in the world...

4. penis-vanishing panics



The bizarre phenomenon of vanishing penises concerns the contagious psychological phenomenon in which victims believe their penises (or labia in rare female cases) to be withdrawing into their abdomens. Psychiatrists have given this the name *koro* – a term derived from the Malay word for a turtle, perhaps because it mimics the way a turtle's head withdraws into the shell.

Koro (see also Letters) has been recognised for centuries by Chinese medicine but has more recently become noted for a series of panics across south-east Asia. Some were documented in FT82, particularly the notorious 1967 Singapore panic where, in a matter of days, over 400 men turned up at local hospitals convinced that their penises were shrinking or had disappeared. Although traditionally regarded as an east Asian phenomenon, in recent years *koro* appears to have jumped continents to West Africa.

The African variant – in which genitalia are abducted through black magic – surfaced in 1990 when stories circulated through Nigeria concerning magicians who could steal someone's manhood with a simple touch. The first full-scale panic occurred in the town of Enugu when a man getting off a bus suddenly screamed that his penis had been stolen. The passenger in front of him was grabbed on suspicion of being a penis-snatching magician. In the ensuing riot the bus driver was accidentally shot dead by the police.

Before long, similar incidents were happening right across West Africa. In August 1996, a mob in Cameroon hanged three men for magically stealing penises and several others were badly beaten. One 18-year-old said that, after shaking hands with a Nigerian friend of his, he "felt an electric-like current run through him, and a feeling that his manhood had retreated into his stomach."

In January 1997, the panics spread west along the Gold Coast. In the Ghanaian towns of Accra, Awutu and Kumasi at least 12 suspected penis-snatchers were murdered by rioting mobs. The Ghanaian authorities believed that the stolen penises were being used for amulets in 'voodoo' rituals. In Abidjan, the capital of neighbouring Ivory Coast, a penis-snatcher was burnt to death by a mob, triggering three days of rioting in which a further two people died. In an attempt to calm the situation, the Ivory Coast government issued a statement denying the penis-snatching rumours. Other more minor incidents were reported from Gabon, Cameroon and Togo.

One final panic occurred in Senegal in August 1997. In a now familiar pattern, rioting mobs lynched over 40 people, all of them foreigners. A

Dakar psychologist blamed 'collective psychosis' for the panics.

How the rumours jumped from Asia to West Africa remains a mystery. Nigeria, where the African rumours originated, has the closest links to Asia and the basic beliefs of *koro* would blend well with local folklore there. Once established within Nigeria, the rumours seem to have spread along the West African coast as far as Senegal and Gabon.

Excepting the Senegal panics, these outbreaks occurred in towns which lie along the same international highway which links Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana and Ivory Coast. The close connection between this road and the majority of panics raises the possibility that the rumours were spread along it, possibly by the many truck-drivers that regularly ply its length.

Since the West African incidents, there have been other panics in rural West Bengal and China. Individual cases of *koro* have also occurred in USA, Canada, Israel and even Hertfordshire! It is even possible that the seeds of a *koro* panic are being sown in Britain. A 1998 study from the Boston University School of Medicine found that cigarette smoking reduced the average length of the penis. This prompted one newspaper to suggest putting the following warning on cigarette packets: "Warning: Smoking can seriously shrink your manhood".

PAUL CHAMBERS

SOURCES:

D.Telegraph, 22 Aug 1996, 15 Mar, 15 June 1997; *The Observer*, 26 July 1996; *D.Mail and Guardian* (South Africa), 11 Mar 1997; *The Star* (South Africa), 23 Jan, 12+14 Aug 1997; *Saturday Star* (South Africa), 15 Mar 1997; *Cape Argus* (South Africa), 30 Jan, 7+12 Aug 1997.

RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED READING

KEY BOOKS ON THIS SUBJECT

Sex and the Paranormal Paul Chambers (1999)
Extraordinary Disorders of Human Behaviour C T Friedmann & R A Faguet (eds) (1989)
Eccentric and Bizarre Behaviours Louis Franzini & John Grossberg (1995)

RECOMMENDED SURFING

KEY WEBSITE ON THIS SUBJECT

fastinternet.net.au/~nemesis/koro.htm
Koro – a psychogenic syndrome

FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

In which we return to some of the stories reported in the pages of *Fortean Times*...

LAST POST BESIDE THE SEA [FT121:8]

The circle of 54 oak posts found protruding from the mud flats at Holme on the north Norfolk coast was first noticed by Geoff Needham of Holme in 1987 and again 10 years later by John Lorimer, after storm tides had swept away the peat dune covering them. This was shortly after he had found a Bronze Age axe head nearby. David Miles, Chief Scientist with English Heritage, told FT that preliminary results of radio-carbon dating at Queen's University, Belfast, and dendrochronological (tree ring) dating at the University of Sheffield indicated (with 95 per cent probability) that the monument dated from between 2310 BC and 1740 BC, placing it in the Bronze Age. Further tree ring comparisons should yield a more accurate date.



In late April, English Heritage decided to lift the trees out of the mud to glean more information about the period and preserve the wood. The timbers will be submerged in water tanks at the Flag Fen Archaeological Centre near Peterborough in Cambridgeshire, after which the plan is to send the temple/storage hut/lighthouse home to north Norfolk. It will be re-erected somewhere in the vicinity of Holme.

The £60,000 rescue excavation by Norfolk Archaeological Unit began between high tides on 26 May and the first post was removed two days later. It was quite a substantial bit of wood, weighing an estimated 250lb (113kg), most of it below ground. The spit oak trunks were set into the ground with the bark on the outside. Brian Ayers of the Norfolk Archaeological Unit said it was misleading to describe the monument as a "henge" as its function was at present unknown.

Despite the near-certain probability that leaving the monument *in situ* without its protective silt would mean its destruction by the tides, some local people and a group of Druids and New Age pagans felt it should not be moved. On 15 June, the £60,000 rescue excavation was stalled by a demonstration of Druids and "spiritualists", who staged a rather damp sit-in. By then, 14 posts had already been removed and the central bole was due to be lifted out by crane. To be continued...

Eastern Evening News, 25 Mar; *Times*, 5 May; *D.Telegraph*, 24 May; *Eastern Daily Press*, 27+29 May, 2+5+7+9+16 June 1999.

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ARTHUR C. CLARKE

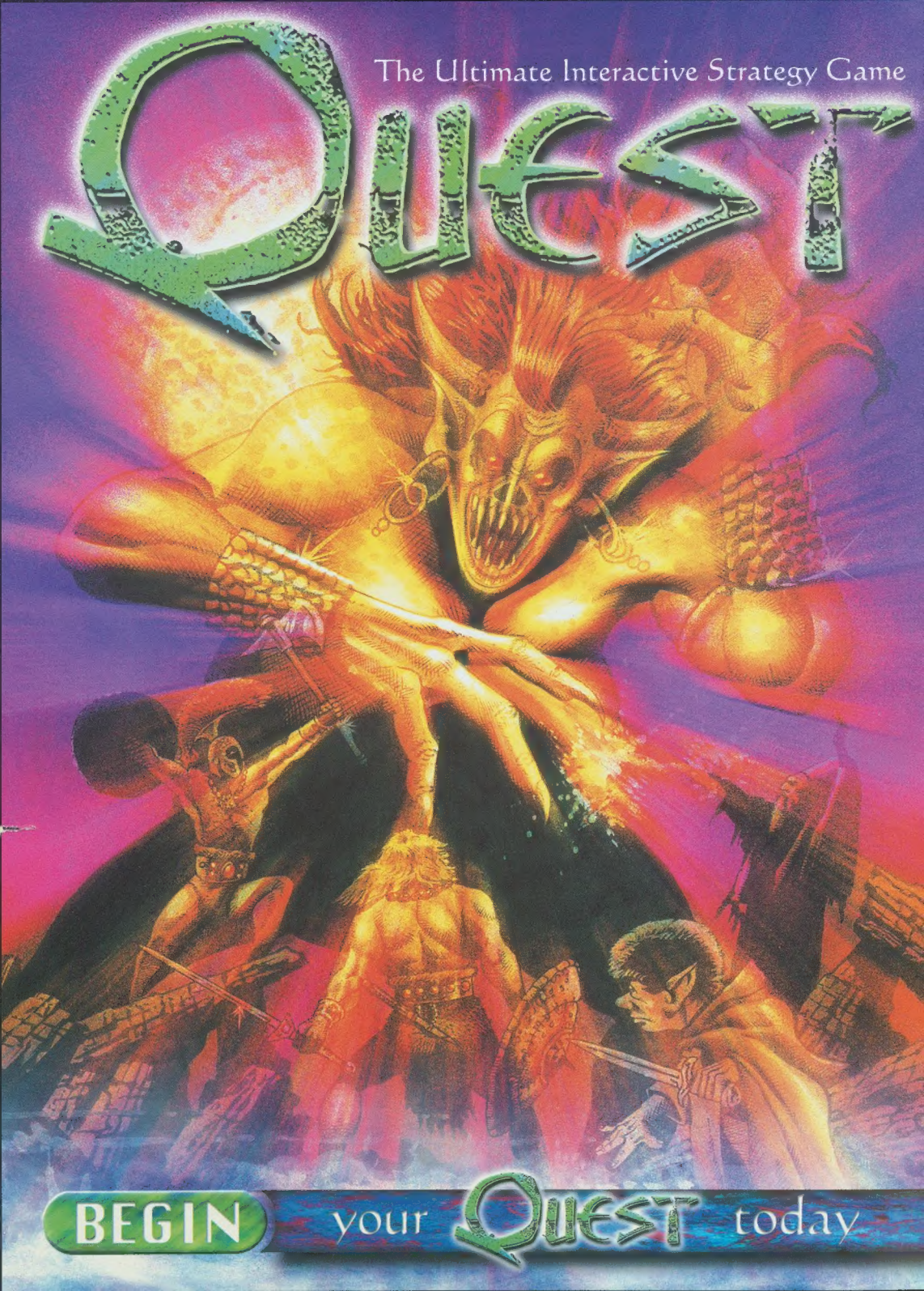
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